

PASTORAL CARE AS PROPHECY:  
A SURVEY IN HISTORICAL AND THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE OF  
CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN CLERGY DIVORCED BETWEEN 1950 AND 1979

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## ABSTRACT

## A. THE PROBLEM

In recent years writers in the field of pastoral care and counseling have called pastoral counselors to take on more of a prophetic role to balance the priestly role that has been emphasized so heavily since the beginnings of pastoral care. This dissertation asks the question "How can pastoral care and counseling be prophetic?" The answer involves the use of a denominational case study to show how the use of evaluative research can provide pastoral care with at least one method of being prophetic to an institution by calling it to accountability with regard to a specific issue. The denomination chosen was the Church of the Brethren. The specific issue was the extent to which the Brethren were able to make their faith practical with regard to the issue of clergy divorce.

## B. METHOD

The method of research chosen involved the use of historical research, an empirical study of twenty-three divorced Brethren ministers, and an integrating of these two methods as a basis upon which pastoral care can make a prophetic statement to the Church of the Brethren. The historical research was used to learn what past agreements, covenants, the Brethren have made about divorce, both for laity and for clergy. The most recent official statement of the Brethren, which allows for clergy divorce and remarriage and which calls the denomination to provide caring and healing within the family of faith, was used as a basis



for designing a questionnaire that was sent to divorced Brethren ministers. These ministers were surveyed to determine whether there were significant differences regarding reported levels of caring and healing between those clergy whose behavior was congruent with recommended denominational procedures and those whose actions were not so congruent. It was reasoned that if the recommendations of the latest official policy were present in the behaviors of divorced Brethren clergy and if those clergy reported receiving high levels of caring and healing from denominational sources, then indicators would be present to argue that the Brethren are able to make their faith practical in this area. The dialogue between the historical data and the empirical data formed the foundation from which a pastoral counselor as researcher could perform a prophetic role by raising to a higher level of denominational awareness the issue of whether the Brethren are doing what they say they want to do in the area of clergy divorce--provide caring and healing.

### C. RESULTS

The results were mixed. On the one hand, there were divorced Brethren pastors, ones who had stayed active in the denomination as pastors and who did act in ways recommended by the denomination, who did report experiencing caring and healing from Brethren sources at levels that were significantly different from (higher than) the levels of caring and healing reported by the divorced Brethren ministers who had not remained active in leadership positions within the denomination. On the other hand, the majority of divorced Brethren clergy reported significantly higher levels of caring and healing overall from sources

outside the denomination and voiced doubts as to whether the official policy of the Brethren really met the needs of divorced Brethren clergy.

The prophetic statement to the Church of the Brethren is that its policy adoption allowing for clergy divorce and remarriage is a good start, but it is not enough. The Brethren now need to make it a high priority to implement the model for caring and healing that they have adopted.

## CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

## A. INTRODUCTION

1. The Need for Pastoral Care to Adopt a Prophetic Role

Seward Hiltner, one of the leading American figures in the field of pastoral care and counseling, has reflected upon the development of pastoral care in relationship to the church and has observed that the time may be right for pastoral counselors to accept a "prophetic mantle."<sup>1</sup> In two addresses to the 1977 convention of the American Association of Pastoral Counselors, Hiltner traced the history of the emergence of pastoral care and counseling, pointing to its beginning on the European continent as the "care of souls" and in England as "pastoral care."<sup>2</sup> Highlights of that emergence included contributions of men like Anton Boisen, Carroll Wise, Sigmund Freud, and others. The Clinical Pastoral Education movement, better teaching in theological schools, the rise of chaplaincy, the development of pastoral counseling centers, the search for financial viability through association with more autonomous organizations and centers, the development of the American Association of Pastoral Counselors and the search for third-party insurance payments, and discussion of possible licensing of pastoral counselors were all cited as part of the development of pastoral care in America.

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<sup>1</sup>Seward Hiltner, "Pastoral Counseling and the Church," Journal of Pastoral Care, XXXI (September 1977), 201.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 194.

Hiltner's discussion of the need for pastoral counselors to be prophetic is what arouses the most interest for this writer, and it is the take-off point for this dissertation. How can the field of pastoral care be prophetic? Hiltner asserts that the prophetic nature of pastoral care can emerge and carry out the essential witness and mission of the church as long as pastoral counseling is "...conceived as a form of ministry, is executed competently with the people who need it, and is organized so as to maintain an appropriate form of accountability to the church."<sup>3</sup> Pastoral care and counseling can thus "...represent the Church with a capital letter within the framework of representing actually existing churches."<sup>4</sup> Hiltner says that such a stance, although it is in the interest of more and better pastoral helping, is actually prophetic in nature. "When it is firm and devoid of arrogance, it may indeed speak for the Lord."<sup>5</sup> This dissertation is an attempt to find at least one way in which pastoral care can be prophetic as it carries out the essential witness and mission of the church.

## 2. The Context of Prophecy: the Church of the Brethren in its Response to its Divorced Clergy

The nature of prophecy is that it is specific and takes place within an historical context. It is therefore impossible to be prophetic in a vacuum. The Old Testament prophets spoke at a specific time to a specific person or group of persons about a specific situation. Prophets challenged kings and nations to be accountable to the covenant and

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 201.    <sup>4</sup>Ibid.    <sup>5</sup>Ibid.

warned of impending dangers if there was not repentance and a turning away from sinful ways. For pastoral care to be prophetic, it must speak to a particular situation. It must call a specific denomination or church or group of individuals to accountability as it itself remains accountable to the church. The specific context for the purpose of this dissertation is the Church of the Brethren's response to its divorced ministers.

The Church of the Brethren is a relatively small Protestant denomination. In 1976 the Brethren reported a total membership of 178,157. Those members were divided into 1041 congregations and eight "fellowships." Full time ministers numbered 496. There were 150 part time ministers and 256 congregations with a non-salaried minister or no minister at all. Yoked parishes accounted for 147 of the 1041 congregations.<sup>6</sup>

The Brethren are part of a larger society in which divorce has become quite common. The National Center for Health Statistics reports that in 1976:

there were an estimated 1,077,000 divorces---more than twice the number of a decade ago. This means that ... divorce affected 2,154,000 men and women, to say nothing of their children, families of origin, and friends.<sup>7</sup>

How the Brethren respond to divorce must be seen within the context of the larger society of which it is a part.

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<sup>6</sup>Gwendolyn F. Bobb (ed.) "1976 Church of the Brethren Statistics," Elgin, IL: General Services Commission of the Church of the Brethren General Board, 1977.

<sup>7</sup>Esther O. Fisher, "The Journal of Divorce," Journal of Divorce, I (Fall 1977), 5.

The Church of the Brethren is not alone among protestant denominations in its struggle over how to remain faithful in responding to divorce. James G. Emerson, Jr., Norskov Olsen, and Donald W. Shaner are but three of many writers who have documented the church's response to divorce since the church's beginnings.<sup>8</sup> How the Brethren specifically have dealt with the issue of divorce in the last one hundred years has been reported by Eugene F. Roop.<sup>9</sup>

Only recently has divorce among clergy become a topic for discussion within several other denominations, including the Church of the Brethren.<sup>10</sup> In 1977 at its Annual Conference, the Church of the Brethren adopted a report, which recognized officially that clergy divorce is an issue in the life of the denomination that needs to be confronted. That report, "Marriage and Divorce: A Biblical Guide to Caring and Healing in the Family of Faith," is based upon a theological understanding of marriage within the context of a faith community.<sup>11</sup> The two main purposes of that report are: (1) to encourage the church "... to actively

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<sup>8</sup>James G. Emerson, Jr., Divorce, the Church and Remarriage (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961); Norskov Olsen, The New Testament Logia on Divorce (Tuebingen: Mohr, 1971); and Donald W. Shaner, A Christian View of Divorce (Leiden: Brill, 1969).

<sup>9</sup>Eugene F. Roop, "The Brethren and Church Discipline," Brethren Life and Thought, XIV (Spring 1969), 92-108; XIV (Summer 1969), 168-182.

<sup>10</sup>Donald C. Houts, "Pastoral Care for Pastors: Toward a Church Strategy," Pastoral Psychology, XXV (Spring 1977), 188. See also "The Ministry: Ordination and Family Life" in "Church of the Brethren Ministry Manual," Elgin, IL: General Board, Parish Ministries Commission, 1978, a report adopted at the Annual Conference of the Church of the Brethren in 1975.

<sup>11</sup>"Marriage and Divorce: A Biblical Guide to Caring and Healing in the Family of Faith," Elgin, IL: Brethren Press, 1977.

nurture marriages and families," and (2) to explore "... ways to deal with families who experience alienation, separation, and divorce."<sup>12</sup>

The last section of the report, "Special Problems for Leadership," includes recommendations for clergy and congregations when a minister's marriage is in crisis leading to or resulting in divorce.<sup>13</sup>

In proposing these kinds of recommendations, the Brethren are trying to do what they have done since their founding in 1708--make their faith practical. According to Brethren scholar Vernard Eller, the central factor in the doctrine and theology of the Brethren

... is a commitment to follow Christ in "radical discipleship." This thrust immediately skews Brethren thought away from the conceptual, the theoretical, the systematic, the theological, and toward the practical, the applicable, the existential.<sup>14</sup>

With regard to divorce, the Brethren historically in the area of family life "... emphasized the sacredness of the family, fidelity in marriage, and strictures against divorce."<sup>15</sup> It has been generally recognized that the Brethren, in emphasizing strictures against divorce, have had to relate to the society around them and have not been immune to the effects of acculturation.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 4.    <sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>14</sup>Vernard Eller, "Beliefs," in Donald Durnbaugh (ed.) The Church of the Brethren Past and Present (Elgin, IL: Brethren Press, 1971), p. 39.

<sup>15</sup>Dale Brown, "Liturgy," in *ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>16</sup>Robert Blair and J. Henry Long, "Modernization and Subgroup Formation in a Religious Organization: A Case Study of the Church of the Brethren," Brethren Life and Thought, XXI (Winter 1976), 5. See also Floyd E. Mallott, Studies in Brethren History (Elgin, IL: Brethren Publishing House, 1954) and Herbert Hogan, "The Intellectual Impact of the Twentieth Century on the Church of the Brethren," Ph.D. Dissertation, Claremont Graduate School, 1958.

This, then, is the situation: within a culture in which divorce is relatively common and in which several church groups have addressed the issue of divorce, the Church of the Brethren, a relatively small protestant denomination, has made an official statement about marriage, divorce, and remarriage. Part of the report focuses on the issue of its clergy who divorce, and it includes several recommendations and guidelines for that particular group. By its title, the report implies an intention to provide caring and healing for divorced church members, including its clergy. Even in the midst of acculturation, the Brethren have tried to remain true to their faith, have tried to make their faith practical as they addressed the issue of divorce. Their latest attempt at that was the adoption of a report in the year of 1977 which proposed certain courses of action based upon theological beliefs about marriage and divorce. This is the specific setting which provides the context in which a pastoral counselor will do research in an attempt to exercise the prophetic function of pastoral care. What, then, is the problem?

#### B. PROBLEM

The problem is to find a way in which pastoral care can be prophetic in this situation. How can the field of pastoral care be prophetic to the Church of the Brethren in its attempts to make its faith practical as it responds to the phenomenon of divorce among its ministers? The denomination has officially adopted a report that implies an intention to provide caring and healing for its divorced clergy. Has that intention, translated into recommendations for action based upon a the-



ological understanding of marriage, resulted in experiences of caring and/or healing for divorced Brethren clergy? From a pastoral caring perspective, what is the prophetic statement to the Church of the Brethren or to divorced Brethren ministers in this situation?

### C. PURPOSE

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the Church of the Brethren's responses to its divorced clergy with special attention on the extent to which the Brethren are able to make their faith practical in that situation. By making this kind of evaluative study, this dissertation provides an example of how pastoral care performs a prophetic function. It does so by calling the denomination as a whole, and/or divorced Brethren ministers, and/or other groups within the denomination to a certain level of accountability. Are the actions being taken ones that reflect the denomination's theological beliefs?

The general method of achieving this purpose includes historical research to determine the development of the denomination's historical, theological, and biblical responses to divorce. It also includes an empirical study to determine whether the recipients of intended caring and healing, divorced Brethren ministers, are receiving the kind of care the denomination says it wants to provide.

Divorce among Brethren clergy has taken place, however, before the adoption of the official statement in 1977. In fact, the 1977 Annual Conference report developed recommendations based partially on how congregations, districts, and divorced clergy had handled clergy divorce before there were official recommendations on that issue.

Because of that situation, the following hypotheses are proposed as a way of stating the purpose in a researchable form.

#### D. HYPOTHESES

The first hypothesis is this: (1) there will be significant difference between two groups of divorced Brethren ministers--those who followed the actions recommended by the 1977 Annual Conference report will experience caring and healing at significantly higher levels than those divorced ministers whose behaviors were not congruent with the denominationally recommended actions. The second hypothesis is that (2) in terms of behavior that is congruent with the actions recommended in the 1977 report, there will be a significant difference between the ministers who were divorced rather recently (since 1970) and the ones who were divorced before 1970. The more recently divorced Brethren ministers will report higher levels of congruence between their behaviors and the ones recommended by the 1977 report.

If it can be shown that the divorced Brethren ministers who acted in ways recommended by the denomination reported higher levels of caring and healing, then a strong indicator exists to support the belief that the Brethren are being successful in making their faith practical in relation to their clergy who experience divorce. Data will exist to indicate that Brethren policy, based upon theological and biblical interpretations of marriage, divorce, and remarriage, is having the effect desired--to promote caring and healing within the family of faith. If the evidence is otherwise, then some basis exists for a prophetic statement to be made to the denomination.

Before a methodology is proposed for testing these hypotheses, several presuppositions should be stated. Since no research is entirely free of bias, it is necessary, if one wants to minimize the amount of bias present in one's research, to make explicit the biases that one has. What follows is a list of biases of which this writer is aware.

#### E. PRESUPPOSITIONS

1. Healthy marriages are preferable to deteriorating ones.

Whatever can be done to nurture healthy marriages and to provide support and counseling for marriages in crisis is better than not providing those expressions of caring and healing.

2. Divorce is an acceptable alternative for clergy. Divorce should not automatically exclude clergy from the practice or ministry. The same is true of remarriage.

3. Each situation involving clergy divorce is unique. Clergy and congregational members will respond to each other in a variety of ways, given the particular personalities involved and the particular circumstances surrounding the divorce of the minister.

4. The Church of the Brethren is a denomination that has historical and biblical traditions which can be useful in working with the issue of clergy divorce. Among these traditions are emphases on community and mutual accountability, the priesthood of all believers, and a congregationally-based polity.

5. Providing conditions for caring and healing does not mean that caring and healing will necessarily be experienced by the intended recipients. It is necessary that the recipients, divorced Brethren

clergy, possess and communicate a willingness and openness to receiving expressions of caring and healing when they are offered.

6. It is possible to determine whether or not there is some degree of congruence between the experience of divorced Brethren clergy and the actions recommended officially by the denomination. Aspects of both the statement on marriage and divorce and of the experience of the divorced ministers can be broken down into specific conditions and behaviors. These can be compared to see what degree of congruence exists between the two.

7. Pastoral care has an obligation to call institutions to accountability. It cannot be satisfied with providing counseling and support--and sometimes confrontation--to individuals and families. It must also confront the church and encourage it to find increasingly more effective ways to carry out its witness and mission, not only to its own members, but to the larger society as well.

Given the situation described above, the problem, the purpose, the hypotheses, and the presuppositions, how does one who is a pastoral carer make a prophetic statement to the Church of the Brethren as it provides care to its divorced ministers? What is the methodology one can use to attack the problem to achieve the purpose?

#### F. METHODOLOGY

This writer begins with a chapter on the history of the Church of the Brethren's treatment of four areas directly related to clergy divorce: marriage, divorce, remarriage, and ordination. What is the Brethren understanding both biblically and theologically of these four

areas? How have the Brethren attempted in the past to make their faith practical in these areas? This chapter provides the background upon which the reader might understand more clearly the present response of the Brethren to the issue of clergy divorce. This historical chapter is chapter two.

Chapter three is an examination of the Brethren response to its divorced clergy. What have been the past Brethren approaches to divorce among their ministers--judgment, acceptance, ambivalence, indifference? What is the present response to divorced clergy, and what are the accompanying biblical and theological presuppositions of that approach? How is the present approach one of "pastoral care" to divorced Brethren ministers?

The fourth chapter is a presentation of empirical data from the lives of divorced Brethren ministers. The population is a small one, numbering about twenty-eight Brethren ministers who have been divorced within the past twenty-nine years. The reports from the experiences of these ministers are used as the basis for informing the present policy of the Brethren regarding clergy divorce.

The first part of the fourth chapter explains the research design, which has several steps. (1) The 1977 Annual Conference report is broken down into specific conditions and behaviors recommended in situations involving the divorce of a minister; (2) divorced Brethren clergy are surveyed with regard to three main areas--(a) the kinds of behaviors and conditions that were present in the divorce experience, (b) the amounts of caring and healing they perceived receiving both during and following their divorces, and (c) their opinions as to the useful

aspects of the denominational policy. (3) The third step in the research design is an examination of the data to test the hypotheses.

Did the divorced ministers surveyed behave in ways similar to the ones recommended by the 1977 Annual Conference? Did those who acted in recommended ways report levels of caring and healing that were significantly different from those who did not follow recommended procedures? Did the ministers divorced since 1970 report acting in the recommended ways at a level significantly different from those ministers who divorced before 1970? (4) The final step in the chapter is an analysis of the findings. Were the hypotheses supported? If not, how does one explain the data? What do the data mean?

Chapter five is the integrative chapter. How can the history and the theology of the Church of the Brethren regarding its treatment of marriage, divorce, remarriage, and ordination in general and its treatment of divorced ministers in particular be integrated with the data from the experiences of its divorced clergy? What are the ways in which the different areas can inform each other? Does the data from human experience inform the denomination in its approach to divorce among clergy? What does the Brethren tradition have to say to the experience of divorced ministers? Finally, what does the study indicate about the denomination's ability to make its faith practical in this one area? What is the prophetic word to the Church of the Brethren, to the divorced ministers in the Church of the Brethren?

The sixth chapter is the concluding one. If it can be determined that the Brethren are able to make their faith practical with regard to clergy divorce, then what does that say about a denomination

which began as a sect-like organization which over the years has tried to maintain a strong commitment to a distinctive Christian lifestyle? If the Brethren are unable to make faith practical here, what does that mean for the future of the denomination? What are the implications of this study for the fields of pastoral care and of church history and for the Church of the Brethren? What are the limitations of the study and the areas that need further study? How can this method of research make a contribution to the field of pastoral care and counseling?

#### G. REVIEW OF RECENT LITERATURE

Other than the action taken at the Annual Conference of the Church of the Brethren,<sup>17</sup> denominational literature has included a symposium on the subject of clergy divorce,<sup>18</sup> as well as an article on ministry which discusses briefly the issue of divorce among the clergy.<sup>19</sup> Eugene Roop has documented the history of the Brethren response to divorce among the laity,<sup>20</sup> and Harold Martin has written a work upholding a scriptural view of divorce and remarriage as sin.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>"Marriage and Divorce."

<sup>18</sup>"Symposium on Divorce and Remarriage," Brethren Life and Thought, XXI (Summer 1976), 133-164.

<sup>19</sup>J. Bentley Peters, "Musings on Ministry," Brethren Life and Thought, XX (Winter 1975), 29-38.

<sup>20</sup>Roop.

<sup>21</sup>Harold S. Martin, The Tragedy of Divorce and Remarriage (Hanover, PA: Bible Helps, 1972).

Besides the Church of the Brethren literature, Seward Hiltner,<sup>22</sup> the Lutherans,<sup>23</sup> and the United Methodists,<sup>24</sup> among others, have discussed the issue of divorce among the clergy. The most extensive study to date has been done among clergy in the Presbyterian Church in the U. S.<sup>25</sup>

None of the literature has attempted to make a descriptive study of the experiences of divorced clergy in comparison to an adopted set of recommendations designed to deal with clergy divorce. Most of the literature has argued either for or against accepting divorced clergy as pastors. Roop has documented historically a denominational response.<sup>26</sup> Katherine L. Ruark has studied descriptively divorced Presbyterian ministers in relationship to subsequent career mobility.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Seward Hiltner, "Divorced Ministers," Pastoral Psychology, IX (October 1959), 19-24.

<sup>23</sup>Leigh Jordahl, "On Clerical Divorces," Dialog, XIV (Summer 1975), 223-225; and Leigh Jordahl, "Another Word on Clerical Divorce and Remarriage," Dialog, XV (Summer 1976), 222 ff.

<sup>24</sup>"Clergy Divorce Guidelines Adopted by Minnesota Conference," United Methodist Reporter (July 24, 1977); "Clergy Divorce Studied," Circuit Rider, II (July/August 1978), 12; Doris M. Jones, "Clergy Families," Circuit Rider, I (June 1977), 12, 13; Doris M. Jones, "Preliminary Conclusions Concerning the Instrument Regarding United Methodist Clergy and Divorce," unpublished paper, July 1976; "Recommendations for Procedure for the Annual Conference's Dealing with Divorce Among the Clergy" (North Texas Conference, United Methodist Church); Pat Sites, "United Methodist Survey Shows Clergy Divorce Still Sensitive Issue with Church," United Methodist Reporter (August 13, 1976); "Trends in Ministry," Circuit Rider, II (July/August 1978).

<sup>25</sup>Katherine L. Ruark, "Clergy Divorce and Subsequent Career Mobility," Ph.D. Dissertation, Florida State University, 1977.

<sup>26</sup>Roop.    <sup>27</sup>Ruark.



## H. DEFINITION OF TERMS

Pastoral care is defined as those "... helping acts directed toward the healing, sustaining, guiding, and reconciling of troubled persons."<sup>28</sup> Pastoral care may include the "confronting of each other as persons" as part of its task.<sup>29</sup> The uniqueness of pastoral care lies in its goal of helping to remove the "blocks that inhibit spiritual growth."<sup>30</sup>

Prophecy in this study refers to the role of pastoral care that heretofore has been neglected. Prophecy is one of the traditional functions of ministry, one that seeks to call individuals as well as institutions to accountability. Hiltner defines prophecy partly as the function of representing the "Church with a capital letter within the framework of representing actually existing churches."<sup>31</sup> This dissertation speaks to the Church with a capital letter as it examines one particular denomination.

A survey is a type of descriptive study which attempts to understand the experiences of a particular group of individuals by collecting data through the use of a questionnaire. The target population of this

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<sup>28</sup>William Clebsch and C. R. Jaekle, Pastoral Care in Historical Perspective (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1964).

<sup>29</sup>Wayne Oates, An Introduction to Pastoral Counseling (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1959).

<sup>30</sup>Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., Basic Types of Pastoral Counseling (New York: Abingdon Press, 1966).

<sup>31</sup>Hiltner, "Pastoral Counseling ...," p. 201.

survey is Church of the Brethren ministers who have experienced the dissolution of a marriage.

In historical and theological perspective means that the issue of clergy divorce will be examined from within the framework of Church of the Brethren history and theology. Looking at the history includes examining the past practices of the Brethren with regard to divorce, remarriage, and ordination. Attention will be given to the Brethren interpretations of those practices theologically. The type of theology the Brethren espouse is a biblical theology based on the New Testament. It is a "Christ-centered" approach to interpreting the scriptures.<sup>32</sup>

Church of the Brethren is defined as that protestant denomination which had its roots in the left-wing Reformation in the early 1700s, established itself in America in the 1800s, and took its present name in 1908, changing it from the "German Baptist Brethren." According to Donald Durnbaugh, the best way to understand the early Brethren is

... to see them as a Radical Pietist group which appropriated an Anabaptist view of the church .... They stressed a gathered church of believers, the discipline of church members, a nonresistant approach to the state, and a theology of obedience.<sup>33</sup>

The present-day Brethren, however, "... have become more and more acculturated as another American denomination, ...."<sup>34</sup> They have, "... with the exception of isolated 'subcultural islands' and occasional 'sectish'

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<sup>32</sup>Donald Durnbaugh, "Brethren and the Authority of the Scriptures," Brethren Life and Thought, XIII (Summer 1968), 171.

<sup>33</sup>Durnbaugh, The Church of the Brethren, p. 11.

<sup>34</sup>Donald Durnbaugh, "The Church in its Historical Expression," Brethren Life and Thought, VI (Summer 1961), 40.

behavior at the Annual Meeting, ..." emerged from "... a small withdrawn sect to a church-like organization ...." with "... rituals and religious forms found in mainstream Protestantism."<sup>35</sup>

Divorced clergy are those persons who have been ordained as ministers in the Church of the Brethren and who have been legally divorced. They may or may not have served as pastors of local congregations at the time of their divorces.

Between 1950 and 1979 is the time frame of the survey. Very few, if any, Brethren ministers are known who were divorced before 1950. Most have been divorced since 1967.

#### I. IMPORTANCE OF THE RESEARCH, AREAS OF CONTRIBUTION

One of the main areas of contribution of this dissertation is in the area of pastoral care and counseling. As was stated earlier, one of the roles of pastoral care in relation to the church at large is the role of prophecy. Prophets call institutions to accountability. Is the Church of the Brethren able to make its faith practical with regard to its divorced ministers? Is it being accountable to congregations and to individual ministers in cases where ministers experience divorce? By raising these kinds of questions and by examining denominational history and polity regarding divorce, remarriage, and ordination, and by surveying the experiences of divorced Brethren ministers as to their perceptions of how the denomination has responded to them, one can form a basis from which to make judgments about the ability of the Brethren

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<sup>35</sup>Blair and Long, p. 5.

to make their faith practical. One can then call the denomination to accountability if it appears that its intentions to provide caring and healing, based upon biblical and theological interpretations of the Bible, are not being translated into practice. This process makes a contribution to the field of pastoral care and counseling by providing a model of how a pastoral carer can be prophetic to an institution. The use of historical and empirical research to examine a particular problem within a specific denomination provides an example of how to use these research tools to gather data from which judgments can be made about a particular institution. Thus, the role of pastoral care is extended to include that of prophecy.

Another area to which a contribution is made is the area of church history for the Church of the Brethren. The material documenting how the Brethren have responded to the issue of divorce among its clergy and how that response has been received by the divorced ministers in question writes a heretofore missing chapter in the history of the Brethren. This study provides another chapter among many stories about how the Brethren have attempted to make their faith practical, keeping it vibrant, so that they are able to say that they are being obedient to the scriptures and to the commands of Christ in faithful discipleship.

Attention now is turned to an historical examination of the Church of the Brethren. Where have the Brethren been and where are they now in their official stands with regard to marriage, divorce, remarriage, and ordination?

## CHAPTER II

A HISTORY OF BRETHREN ATTEMPTS TO MAKE FAITH  
PRACTICAL IN THE AREAS OF MARRIAGE,  
DIVORCE, REMARRIAGE, AND  
ORDINATION

## A. INTRODUCTION

As we stated above, prophecy does not take place outside of a specific context. If pastoral care is to be prophetic to the Church of the Brethren, it must have some understanding of Brethren history in areas related to the issue of clergy divorce, namely, those areas of marriage, divorce, remarriage, and ordination. The Old Testament prophets called the Hebrews to be true to the Covenant that they had made with Jahweh. Pastoral care calls the Brethren to be true to their own tradition. What has that tradition been? How has it been translated into action?

This chapter examines the history of Brethren attempts to make faith practical in the four areas mentioned above. How did the Brethren understand scripturally and theologically the meaning of marriage, divorce, remarriage, and ordination? How have they attempted to apply those understandings to specific situations that have called for some kind of action?

Divorce and remarriage can only be understood within the context of an understanding of marriage.<sup>1</sup> This chapter initially examines the Brethren understanding of marriage, first in the nineteenth century

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<sup>1</sup>"Marriage and Divorce: A Biblical Guide to Caring and Healing in the Family of Faith," Elgin, IL: Brethren Press, 1977.

and then in the twentieth century. With that as a basis, attention is then turned to their understanding of divorce and remarriage, again, both nineteenth century and twentieth century views. Ordination is discussed as a prelude to chapter three, which deals with the Brethren response to ordained members who have experienced divorce. Knowing the history of the denomination's understanding of ordination makes it easier to understand the Brethren response to divorced clergy.

Before discussion begins with regard to how the Brethren approach theologically the particular issue of marriage, attention will be given to how the Brethren generally approach the process of doing theology. As Eller has stated above, the Brethren historically have had a commitment to follow Christ in "radical discipleship."<sup>2</sup> What approach to theology has resulted from this type of commitment?

#### B. THE BRETHREN APPROACH TO THEOLOGY

The key to understanding how the Brethren think theologically is to understand their stance on the authority of the scriptures. The Brethren have always looked to the New Testament to determine how the early church acted. Their goal has been to try to follow Christ in radical discipleship, to act in ways they believed the early church would have acted.

Donald Durnbaugh contends that the three major strands of the Church of the Brethren--the Reformed, the Pietist, and the Anabaptist--

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<sup>2</sup>Vernard Eller, "Beliefs," in Donald Durnbaugh (ed.) The Church of the Brethren Past and Present (Elgin, IL: Brethren Press, 1971), p. 39.

have all stressed the authority of the scriptures.<sup>3</sup> The Brethren approach to the Bible is "Christ-centered," with an emphasis on the New Testament.<sup>4</sup> Historically, the Brethren have espoused a non-creedalism, insisting that they have "no creed but the New Testament."<sup>5</sup> The Brethren avoid being Marcionites by their willingness to accept the Old Testament and interpret it "in light of the New" (Testament).<sup>6</sup>

The Brethren, like John Calvin, Menno Simons, and Jakob Spener, an early Pietist whose thought greatly influenced the early Brethren, have emphasized the "inner Word" and the "outer Word."<sup>7</sup> The role of the Spirit is important here in the interpretation of scripture. There is a sense in which the Spirit "must be present in order rightly to understand the Word."<sup>8</sup>

Another important aspect of the Brethren approach to scripture is an emphasis on always remaining open to new truth. The Brethren occupy a middle ground between being strict literalists and strayers from the Word. Their insistence upon interpreting the scriptures in "the mind of Christ" makes it possible for them to stay in this middle ground theologically and biblically.<sup>9</sup>

The Brethren approach to theology is therefore biblically based. The emphasis on the New Testament and on discerning the mind of Christ are the bases upon which the Brethren find guidance for following Jesus

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<sup>3</sup>Donald Durnbaugh, "Brethren and the Authority of the Scriptures," Brethren Life and Thought, XIII (Summer 1968).

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 171. <sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 172. <sup>6</sup>Ibid. <sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 173.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Church of the Brethren. Minutes. 1964, p. 11.

in radical discipleship.

Given this approach to doing theology, how does one determine what the Brethren believe about marriage and divorce, about remarriage and ordination? Where does one search to find how those beliefs are articulated as practical solutions to real problems? One turns to the minutes of the denomination's Annual Conferences, or "Annual Meetings," as they used to be called.

#### C. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE AS SOURCE MATERIAL

"Officially, the Annual Conference of the Church of the Brethren is the highest source of authority in the denomination...."<sup>10</sup> As such, the minutes of those conferences furnish the official positions of the Brethren on the issues being studied here.

As far as can be determined, the Brethren had their first Annual Meeting in 1742.<sup>11</sup> The first printed minutes were of the Annual Meeting of 1778. There is uncertainty about how many meetings were held between those two dates. During the fifty years following 1778 there were many Annual Meetings, but no records of them are available. Beginning again in 1830, all the minutes of the Annual Meetings are on record. Elder Henry Kurtz made the first compilation of these minutes in 1867.<sup>12</sup> Since then, minutes of each succeeding Annual Meeting were printed or

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<sup>10</sup>Robert Blair and J. Henry Long, "Modernization and Subgroup Formation in a Religious Organization: A Case Study of the Church of the Brethren," Brethren Life and Thought, XXI (Winter 1976), 23.

<sup>11</sup>Church of the Brethren. Minutes. 1778-1922, p. 3.

<sup>12</sup>Elder Henry Kurtz, The Brethren's Encyclopedia (Columbus, OH: published by the author, 1867).



compiled by a variety of authors.<sup>13</sup> It is to these documents that we turn to discover the Brethren beliefs and practices about marriage, divorce, remarriage, and ordination.

#### D. MARRIAGE

##### 1. Nineteenth Century Statements

Records of the earliest annual meetings show no systematic theology about marriage. What is found is a series of answers by the Annual Meeting to questions posed about very specific situations regarding the breakdown of marriage, or divorce. One must infer what a Brethren theology of marriage is during the nineteenth century from what is said about divorce and remarriage.

For the most part, divorce is not allowed. The expectation is that marriage will be a lifelong venture. The first compiler of the Annual Meeting minutes says:

From all the gospel teaches, ... , our brethren could not come to any other conclusion but the following: That in the New Testament there is no warrant at all for divorce with a view to marriage, or to marrying again; ....<sup>14</sup>

Eugene Roop observes that "there is no recovered record of an instance of divorce and remarriage among the earliest Brethren, first in Germany and then in America."<sup>15</sup> This statement seems to support the view that

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<sup>13</sup>Church of the Brethren. Minutes. 1923-1944, 1945-1954, 1955-1964, 1965-1970.

<sup>14</sup>Kurtz, p. 90.

<sup>15</sup>Eugene F. Roop, "The Brethren and Church Discipline," Brethren Life and Thought, XIV (Spring 1969), 100.

either everyone who was married stayed married, or that remarriage was not allowed with divorces' being kept secret or resulting in loss of church membership. Roop does report that some of the recorded concerns had to do with marrying outside the fellowship, with proper behavior for courting or engaged couples, and with proper marriage procedure.<sup>16</sup> Based on the statements above and the lack of reporting about divorce among the early Brethren, the conclusion is that nineteenth century Brethren intended marriage to be for life.

About 1900 there was a change in the way the Annual Conferences dealt with the queries that came to it. Instead of trying to take each case individually, "... the Annual Meeting began to appoint committees to study the overall questions involved."<sup>17</sup> Specifically with regard to the issue of marriage and divorce,

... the Annual Meeting of 1898 adopted a report on the issue of divorce and remarriage which they hoped would satisfy the many different cases which the local congregations might face.<sup>18</sup>

That report urged churches to "uphold and maintain the sacredness and purity of the marriage relation."<sup>19</sup> The text below gives one the sense of where the Brethren were at the beginning of the twentieth century on the issue of marriage:

2. We, the brethren and sisters of the Brummett's Creek church, N. C., petition District Meeting to urge Annual Meeting to make a

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 100n. See also Donald Durnbaugh, European Origins of the Brethren (Elgin, IL: Brethren Press, 1958), pp. 281, 282; and Donald Durnbaugh, The Brethren in Colonial America (Elgin, IL: Brethren Press, 1967), pp. 238, 239, 275.

<sup>17</sup>Roop, p. 100.    <sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Church of the Brethren. Minutes. 1778-1909, p. 669.

decision on the divorce question, in order to avoid trouble in the churches, as it was indefinitely postponed by Annual Meeting of '91.

Answer: The New Testament teaches:

(1) That divorce cannot be obtained except "for the cause of fornication," Matt. 5:32.

(2) That whosoever shall put away his (sic) wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery." Matt. 19:9.

We therefore decide that no divorced person, having married again while a former companion is still living, can be received into the church unless it can be clearly shown that said companion was put away because of fornication.

All the churches are hereby urged to exercise the utmost care in applying this decision in all cases of divorce, and to do everything possible to uphold and maintain the sacredness and purity of the marriage relation.<sup>20</sup>

The view of marriage at the end of the nineteenth century was that it was for life. Divorce was allowed only for the exceptional case, in which one of the spouses was guilty of fornication.

The twentieth century views of marriage and divorce came in three separate reports as the Brethren tried to put their theological beliefs about those areas into practical suggestions for action. Those reports were adopted in 1933, 1964, and 1977. Attention now is turned to the twentieth century Brethren.

## 2. Twentieth Century Statements

a. 1933. The 1933 statement refers its readers to the New Testament scriptures relevant to the issue of marriage and divorce: Matthew 5:27-32; 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-12; and Luke 16:18. The theological statement reaffirms that marriage is the "original intention of God, ....

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

one man and one woman for life, (Gen. 1:27; 2:18, 24; Mark 10:9)."<sup>21</sup>  
 The teachings of Jesus, of the apostles; the practices of the early church; and the creation story in Genesis are used to support lifelong monogamy as the goal for Christian marriage.

b. 1964.<sup>22</sup> The minutes from the Annual Meeting of 1964 use the book of Mark to support the view of marriage of one man and one woman for life: "In Mark 10, Jesus makes clear God's perfect will for the marriage relationship, and the undeniable intent of marriage. It is intended to be lifelong and indissoluble." (p. 11.) The other scriptures in the report refer to many of the same passages as before: Matt. 5:27-32, 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-12; Luke 16:18; Romans 7:1-3; and I Corinthians 7:10-17.

c. 1977.<sup>23</sup> The report adopted thirteen years later also sees marriage as a lifetime relationship:

... all creation is good .... We are a covenant people. God's covenant was made real to us in Christ .... For the Christian, marriage is intended as a lifetime commitment to intimacy and continuing growth for both partners. Creative marriage has an enduring and covenantal quality. (p. 3)

In addition to the "enduring and covenantal" quality, marriage also has the "potential of being that arena of life in which the central truths of the Gospel of Christ may be discovered and lived out." (p. 4)

Marriage, however, is set within the context of the "faith

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 1923-1944, p. 95.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 1964. The numeral in parentheses refer to page numbers in the report.

<sup>23</sup>"Marriage and Divorce."

community," which is responsible for nurturing all members of the community, whether persons choose single or married life." (p. 1) It is only within this context that marriage is at its best: "... wholesome marriage cannot be achieved apart from the participation of each partner in the wider community." (p. 4)

The biblical references to support these theological statements are Exodus, chapters 19-24; Matthew 19; John 10:10; and Galatians 5:1. The scriptures from Exodus are used to show that the rules "of social life are set within the framework of the covenant community." (p. 1) Without this larger fellowship, "the individual or the family could not cope with life itself." Matthew 19 further supports the concept of life within the covenant and within the context of the faith community by referring to how Jesus set marriage within the context of the kingdom, "which informs the character and structure of marriage." (p. 1)

John 10:10 (NEB) is used to support the view that Jesus' life "was thrust toward growth; he looked at people in terms of what they could become." (p. 2) Marriage, therefore, should be a relationship in which mutual growth should occur. Jesus' purpose in coming, it is reasoned, was to help us find life "in all its fullness." As a result, "growth experiences are needed today in our inner lives, our marriages, our churches, and our world." (p. 1)

Galatians 5:1 is a reference to the fact that when we as individual marriage partners and a community of believers are "rooted in Christ," we will be able to serve God and one another. This is important in the providing of mutual support to avoid the pitfall of "retreating from the family or marriage which experiences crisis." (p. 1)

The example of Jesus as one "who gives to the other in time of need" is used to exhort the Brethren not to "back away from those who experience alienation in marriage or family life." (p. 1) The importance of the faith community is reaffirmed, because "unless we have been with one another in the fullness of the relationship, we are in no position to support or confront at the time of difficulty." (p. 3) This emphasis on the important aspects of the faith community then leads to the making of specific recommendations to local congregations and districts for ways to strengthen the faith community.

All of the statements in the twentieth century reaffirm marriage as a lifelong commitment. The 1977 report expands the biblical basis for marriage to include its being seen within the context of faith community, where it is to be rooted in Christ and a growth-producing relationship.

Given the above nineteenth and twentieth century views of marriage, the question now is "How did the Brethren attempt to deal with exceptions to their belief in marriage as lifelong monogamy?" How was divorce treated in the 1800s and 1900s by the Brethren? How did the Brethren understand divorce theologically, and how did they attempt to put their faith into practice with regard to divorce?

## E. DIVORCE

### 1. Nineteenth Century Statements

During the nineteenth century the Brethren had a fairly consistent attitude toward divorce: "they would not allow people who were

divorced to be members of the church."<sup>24</sup> This was not an inviolable law, however. If the other partner was guilty of "unchastity" or "fornication," divorce was allowed.<sup>25</sup>

In 1880 the Brethren adopted a statement that allowed divorce on the basis of I Corinthians 7:15, where Paul lets a Christian separate from a spouse if the partner is not a Christian and does not want to stay married. This decision by the Brethren was a reversal of a decision made in 1860, which stated that the only cause for divorce was fornication. According to Roop, "the decision of 1860 is inexplicably contradictory to Brethren who usually sought to apply the biblical principles as exactly as they could."<sup>26</sup> Roop concludes that

Although the Brethren wanted to stand firmly against any member of the church obtaining a divorce, it is clear they recognized certain situations in which divorce was permissible, albeit only on grounds that could clearly be shown to be biblical.<sup>27</sup>

The real discussion on the divorce question came, however, on the issue of remarriage. Before looking at the issue of remarriage, we will examine the Brethren statements on divorce during the twentieth century.

## 2. Twentieth Century Statements

a. 1933.<sup>28</sup> The earliest statement by the Brethren in this

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<sup>24</sup>Roop, p. 101.

<sup>25</sup>Church of the Brethren. Minutes. 1778-1909, p. 669.

<sup>26</sup>Roop, p. 102.    <sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Church of the Brethren. Minutes. 1923-1944.

century about divorce came during the 1933 Annual Conference. That statement dealt with the biblical background of marriage (God's intention is lifelong monogamy). Jesus, Paul, and the early church were also against divorce. Therefore, the contemporary church must emphasize the sacredness of marriage and not allow ordained Brethren ministers to officiate at weddings where one of the couple had one or more living companions.

In a section of the report, "Dealing with Exceptions," room in the church is made available for those who repent of their sins:

Since "neither fornicators nor adulterers can enter the kingdom of God," the church cannot hold as members either unmarried or married persons who have committed the sins of fornication and adultery, unless they sincerely repent and refrain from these sins (Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:3-5; I Cor. 6:9, 10). (p. 96)

If such persons do repent and petition for church membership, the church, "praying the direction of the Holy Spirit," (p. 96) then decides whether to receive or reject the individuals. If they are received as members, however, they shall not be eligible to the office of deacon or minister." (p. 97) Cited as scriptural support for that position are I Timothy 3:2, 12, and Titus 1:6. (p. 96) This position reiterates statements made in 1866 and 1885 which said that "fallen ministers" and divorced persons can become church members, but they cannot be allowed to serve as deacons or ministers.<sup>29</sup>

In making the recommendations that it does to allow for exceptions to previously-adopted policy, the 1933 statement reflects the belief that it is

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 1778-1922, p. 54.



not ignoring the Christian ideal of marriage, but is making an exception for the truly repentant, giving them the advantage of church membership and commending them to the mercy, love, and grace of God--as it seems evident that the apostolic church sometimes did. (p. 97)

Here we begin to see steps toward an emphasis on forgiveness and compassion, rather than on judgment and condemnation.

b. 1964.<sup>30</sup> The 1964 statement was adopted after it had been recommitted the previous year for further study. The 1963 report which was not adopted referred to the 1933 statement and allowed for remarriage. In addition, it gave pastors the authority to treat remarriage as they would treat "an individual counseling situation." (p. 10)

The 1964 report originated as a response to a query from two different districts' inquiring about the scriptural basis for ministers' marrying divorced persons. While the report reemphasized the intent of marriage as lifelong and indissoluble, the main emphasis was given to concepts like healing, compassion, understanding, love, and reconciliation. Statements like these illustrate the intent of the 1964 report:

Since Jesus used ... spiritual and human insights relating to their special situation--divorce--today these same insights are available for Christians to interpret the same question in light of our present situation, in light of the complete message of the Gospel, and in light of the whole mind of Christ. The compassion of Jesus in dealing with those who had broken the laws of His day (see John 8: 2-11) would teach us, as a church, to deal with compassion, understanding, and love toward those whose marriages are broken either with or without a legal divorce. (p. 11)

Here we see one of the first instances of acknowledging the importance of using human insights to interpret the scriptures.

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 1964.

It is assumed in the report that free will and human sin lead to broken relationships. Because of them, the church must be involved in a ministry of "reconciliation": "The healing of broken marriages is as great and urgent a concern of the church as is the healing of the brokenness represented by alcoholism and physical and mental illness." (p. 11)

The 1964 statement deals with adultery (remarriage while a former spouse is still living) by referring to the "exceptive clause" (Matthew 19:9 and 5:24) and to the teachings of Paul in I Corinthians 7. These scriptures "led the church to recognize that not all marriages, even of persons who are members of the church, were truly ordained by God." (p. 11)

After this type of an introduction, the report then speaks to the issue of whether ministers ought to perform wedding ceremonies in situations where one of the parties has a former spouse still living. After a reassessment of the 1933 statement, the 1964 report urges the "expansion of the church's ministry of forgiveness, redemption, and reconciliation (II Corinthians 5:17-21) for persons with this special experience." (p. 11) In doing so, the church is to maintain the Christian standards of marriage as lifelong monogamy, seeking to restore the broken relationship where possible, but recognizing that the redemptive approach "may include divorce as a means of resolving the former bond, and the freedom to enter a new marriage with the guidance and blessing of the church." (!) (p. 12) Here is the first public acknowledgment that divorce can be part of the redemptive process and is worthy at times to receive the blessing of the church!

Ministers may perform ceremonies of marriage involving divorced persons under the following conditions: (1) the divorced person must show "evidence of penitence for his or her own responsibility in the failure of the marriage;" (2) both partners must show evidence "that they are seeking a mature understanding of a commitment to the standards of a true Christian marriage;" (3) the pastor must have "the opportunity for continued pastoral guidance of the couple;" and (4) no minister need feel "against his (sic) own conscience ... obliged to marry a couple of which one or both persons have been divorced." (p. 12) In the counseling of couples, pastors should have at least four to six counseling sessions with them, complement their own counseling with referrals, and guide the couples into a meaningful relationship with the church's fellowship and program.

In relation to the issue of divorce, the 1964 statement continues the denominational trend toward compassion and understanding. The burden of responsibility is placed upon the minister to counsel with and determine the level of sincerity of the couple in their penitence. Thirteen years have passed before the Brethren again confronted officially the issue of divorce. We turn now to the 1977 statement.

c. 1977.<sup>31</sup> The 1977 statement begins by defining marriage within the context of the faith community. It then proceeds to describe two main barriers to fulfillment in marriage. These are (1) the "taboo of privatism," which prevents married couples from disclosing to others,

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<sup>31</sup>"Marriage and Divorce."

even to another "caring" couple, what is going on inside their marriage, and (2) the "myth of naturalism," the belief that people who marry "just naturally know how to live together happily." (p. 6) Because of these barriers and several other factors which contribute to the breakdown of marriages, the church can no longer

assume that couples will remain married because of the expectations of the family, church, and community; they are likely to stay together in the future because their relationship is fulfilling to them as individuals and as a couple. (p. 5)

This first section of the 1977 report then lists two pages of recommendations for congregations, districts, and local pastors in helping to lower barriers so that engaged and married couples might find ways in their relationships to create fulfilling marriages. Several of these recommendations include provisions for marriage enrichment types of experiences and other types of preventative steps couples, churches, and districts can take.

Because divorce is viewed within the context of marriage as a covenant relationship within a faith community, "the legal implications of a divorce are ultimately of lesser consequence." (p. 9) The Christian is to understand that civil law can deal only with the civil contract and not "with the implications of a broken covenant." (p. 9) Therefore, the church must

realize that there are binding aspects of the covenant that will always be with those who entered into this relationship. There is no way to withdraw the effect one person has and continues to have upon another--in this sense there is no such thing as divorce. (p. 9)

Avoiding any type of legalistic application of the biblical texts to divorce, the 1977 report justifies this approach by saying that to have done so denies "the spirit and tone of Christ's teaching."

(p. 9) Here the emphasis must be that "'... the church does have a word beyond judgment to announce to those caught in divorce ...' (—Eugene F. Roop, "Brethren Life and Thought," Summer, 1976)." (p. 9)

Asserting that seeing divorce as the "problem" often leads the church to focus on only part of the issue, the '77 statement calls the church to pay attention to "the breakdown of the marriage relationship, whether or not that breakdown results in divorce." (p. 9) The church, in dealing with brokenness, "is called upon to help the husband and wife to comprehend the interpersonal dynamics involved in their relationship and move toward forgiveness and understanding." (p. 9) Counseling can help, and the church should either provide counseling or be able to refer couples to qualified counselors.

It may be that couples, after a thorough discussion of all the options, even in light of their faith, may decide that "the most responsible action for them is to separate rather than to continue to live in a broken and increasingly destructive relationship." (p. 9) The report asserts that "in some cases the well-being of all family members requires the legal termination of the relationship through divorce." (p. 9) When this happens divorce counseling is appropriate and may include "pre-divorce, divorce, post-divorce, and 'grief work' counseling," to provide the possibility for a "growth-producing experience for the individuals." (p. 10)

The church's task when there is a divorce in the congregation is "to surround the divorcing persons with love and concern." (p. 10) The report urges compassion, criticizes the taking of sides, and hopes that everyone's "best efforts ... be concentrated in helping those who

are suffering through divorce to find forgiveness and healing." (p. 10)

Other arguments in the report assert that a basic tenet of the faith has been that "suffering need not be destructive," that new life is possible through God's grace, and that the death and resurrection imply that divorced persons "should stop blaming themselves for past failures, ... move beyond feelings of humiliation, and once again ... value themselves as persons of worth." (p. 10) The church is to have a role in this endeavor. Even though it is recognized that the church has not always responded helpfully to divorce in the past, congregations are urged today to find ways to "support, sustain, and redeem the brokenness of the people involved." (p. 10) The couple who experiences dissolution of their marriage needs to "be given opportunities to affirm the positive aspects of the broken marriage, make confession, ask forgiveness, and recognize their continuing responsibility to any children." (p. 10)

From these selections from the 1977 report, it is clear that the emphasis is placed upon ways congregations and church members can be supportive, sustaining, and redemptive in response to those who divorce. Even though acknowledgment is made that confrontation may be called for in some situations, minimal attention is given to challenging or confronting those who experience divorce.

## F. REMARRIAGE

### 1. Nineteenth Century Statements

For the Church of the Brethren "the real heat on the divorce question" comes on the issue of remarriage, for the Brethren have seen

remarriage as "... a separate issue from divorce."<sup>32</sup> According to Roop the Brethren interpretation of Romans 7:1-3 and I Corinthians 7:11 was that

the person could remarry only if his (sic) partner died. Yet this left open for them the question of whether a person could remarry if he (sic) obtained a divorce on the biblically legitimate grounds of unchastity (cf. Matt. 5:32, 19:9).<sup>33</sup>

This question of whether a church member could remarry on the grounds just mentioned remained "unsettled until (and perhaps beyond) the Annual Conference action of 1964."<sup>34</sup>

Several examples from the early minutes give one a feel for how the Brethren struggled with the issue of remarriage. One example is the response to a question asked in 1873 as to whether a minister could marry someone who had a previous spouse living. The answer was "no." This followed by fifteen years a decision in 1850 allowing divorced persons to remarry if the previous mate had died. For a divorced person to do otherwise meant that one was guilty of adultery, regardless of how the divorce was attained (an 1842 decision).<sup>35</sup>

In 1867 Maryland accepted "fornication" as a cause to annul the marriage contract. The Annual Meeting referred to the issue several times and in 1870 adopted a statement allowing death as the only valid cause for annulling a marriage contract. The statement admitted that the issue was "problematic."<sup>36</sup> This issue was deferred in 1877 and again in 1880. In 1880 a query came asking for guidance for what a

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<sup>32</sup>Roop, pp. 102, 168.    <sup>33</sup>Ibid., pp. 168, 169.    <sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 168.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 170.    <sup>36</sup>Ibid.

church should do when it learns that one of its members "has a former companion living, from whom a divorce has been obtained because of fornication."<sup>37</sup> A committee of seven submitted this answer, which was adopted by the Annual Meeting:

We, your committee, after due deliberation, in the fear of the Lord, come to the following conclusion: We adopt the decision of Annual Meeting of 1868, Art. 1, which reads as follows: We postpone this question indefinitely, but advise the churches to proceed cautiously when they have cases of this character to act upon.<sup>38</sup>

No decision was made to take action at that time.

Eleven years later a majority and a minority report appeared on the issue, but again it was deferred because it did not get the required two-thirds vote. For eight years following that, "the decision as to whether a person could be permitted to remarry after obtaining a divorce on the grounds of unchastity was retained by the local congregation."<sup>39</sup>

In 1899 a decision was finally made, but with much debate. A query came asking the Annual Meeting to make a decision to avoid trouble caused among the churches by the earlier decision in 1891 to postpone indefinitely the question. The Annual Meeting decided in 1899 that a person who remarried while a former spouse was still living could become a member of the church (or remain a member) if the divorce had come because of fornication or unchastity on the part of the former spouse.<sup>40</sup> This 1899 decision stood as the official Brethren position for over thirty years, and the next time the Brethren discussed the issue of

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<sup>37</sup>Church of the Brethren. Minutes. 1778-1885, p. 232.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid. <sup>39</sup>Roop, p. 172.

<sup>40</sup>Church of the Brethren. Minutes. 1778-1909, p. 669.



divorce and remarriage at the Annual Meeting, it was 1933.<sup>41</sup> It is to the statement of that year that we now turn our attention.

## 2. Twentieth Century Statements

a. 1933.<sup>42</sup> The 1933 statement took basically the same approach on the issue of remarriage as the one taken by the 1899 report. It reaffirmed that Jesus' teachings indicated that anyone divorcing a companion and marrying another "commits adultery;" that even marrying a divorced person is committing adultery; and that there is only one legitimate cause for divorce--"except it be for fornication." (p. 95) Emphasis is placed on the point that divorce on the grounds of a spouse's unchastity does not provide a cause for remarriage. Paul's teachings are reaffirmed: if there is to be a marital separation, the individuals are to stay unmarried or be reconciled.

Where the 1933 report differs from the earlier one is in a section interpreting the practices of the apostolic church. Passages in I Timothy (3:2, 12) and Titus (1:6) are cited to support that remarried persons were able to be church members:

The implication of these scriptures would seem to be that, while the church was upholding the original law of God and the teachings of Jesus, yet persons with more than one living companion were sometimes admitted to church membership, but not to official position in the church. (p. 96)

No mention is given, however, as to whether fornication was the basis upon which the first companion was divorced.

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<sup>41</sup>Frederick D. Dove, Cultural Changes in the Church of the Brethren (Elgin, IL: Brethren Publishing House, 1932), p. 218.

<sup>42</sup>Church of the Brethren. Minutes. 1923-1944.

In recommending action, the 1933 report states that ministers should not officiate at weddings where "one has one or more living companions" and that youth should be given "proper instruction" regarding marriage. (p. 96) The church could, however, receive remarried persons as members if they had a previous spouse living if there were signs of repentance. The key to church membership becomes one of repentance, regardless of the reason for the divorce. Who decides who is truly repentant and therefore worthy of church membership? The local congregation decides. A favorable decision by the congregation can result in membership, but not in the holding of an office such as deacon, minister, or elder. The same procedure applies to those members who wish to be kept as members if they choose to remarry while they are still members.

The Annual Conference of 1933, in accepting the report, wanted to assure the denomination that receiving remarried persons as church members does not ignore the "Christian ideal of marriage." Rather, in making exceptions for these remarrieds, the church is emulating the actions of the early church:

the church ... is making an exception for the truly repentant, giving them the advantage of church membership and commending them to the mercy, love, and grace of God--as it seems evident that the apostolic church sometimes did. (p. 97)

This argument takes a step away from a literal interpretation of the scriptures and tries to discover the attitude behind the written verse.

b. 1964.<sup>43</sup> The key to understanding the report adopted in 1964 is to understand the authority given to the pastor of each congregation

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 1964.

to decide in each case whether or not to perform wedding ceremonies involving persons who have previous spouses still living. According to Roop:

there was in both 1868 and 1964 a feeling that the issue was vitally important, that no one rule could be made to fit all cases, and that the church should work closely and carefully with all cases of divorce and remarriage.<sup>44</sup>

The 1964 position continued a direction of expansion of the church's ministry of reconciliation and emphasized the role of the pastor as counselor in deciding who should be married in the church.

This action reflected a complete change in the way the Brethren handled cases of divorce and remarriage. In the nineteenth century the church as a whole would act; now the pastor had the authority to act on behalf of the congregation. The 1964 report was so bold, in fact, as to state that the "redemptive approach" might mean that a divorce could be used as a way of "resolving" the former bond, and that there could be a "freedom to enter a new marriage with the guidance and blessing of the church." (p. 12)

c. 1977.<sup>45</sup> The 1977 approach to remarriage reaffirms the 1964 attitude that there is "freedom to enter a new marriage with the guidance and blessing of the church." (p. 10) Church members are urged to be loving "rather than judgmental with regard to remarriage, both of the laity and the clergy." (p. 10)

Recognizing the reality of remarriage in the society, the report affirms the fact that remarriage can carry trauma and some "new problems"

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<sup>44</sup>Roop, p. 177.    <sup>45</sup>"Marriage and Divorce."

for divorced persons. This should not hinder reconciliation between the divorced person and the previous spouse, for "such reconciliation is important to the future of the new marriage." (p. 10) Thus, where it is possible, persons planning to remarry should try to find some kind of reconciliation with the former spouse.

The responsibility of the church in cases of remarriage is to be "responsible for those persons who remarry after the divorce in all the ways it is responsible for those who marry for the first time." (p. 10) In fact, because there is recognition that a remarriage may be even "more complex" than a first marriage, the church is strongly urged to put into effect a long list of recommendations for ministry to divorcing and divorced persons.

In referring to remarriage, the 1977 report does not cite the scriptures used by Annual Conferences in earlier decisions (Matthew and I Corinthians). This may be due partly to the fact that the 1977 report understood its task as that of addressing "the role of the church as it faces the distressing circumstances of broken family relationships of pastors and lay persons alike." (p. 9) The committee writing the report sees its primary focus as that of:

- (1) encouraging the church to actively nurture marriages and families, and (2) exploring ways to deal with families who experience alienation, separation, and divorce. (p. 9)

In that sense, the 1977 statement is more of a how-to-deal-with-the-existing-situation rather than a legislating and a proof-texting about whether remarriage should be allowed in certain situations. The committee explains their not applying the biblical texts legalistically: to do so would be to deny the "spirit and tone of Christ's teaching."

(p. 9) The attitude of the 1977 report is redemptive, not judgmental.

G. SUMMARY OF THE BRETHREN APPROACHES TO MAKING  
FAITH PRACTICAL WITH REGARD TO MARRIAGE,  
DIVORCE, AND REMARRIAGE

There is little question that all of the statements by the Brethren reflect the belief that marriage is to be lifelong and monogamous. This theological understanding of marriage has not changed over the years. What has changed are the practices adopted by the Brethren as they have tried to respond to their members who have not lived up to that ideal.

The nineteenth century Brethren would not allow divorced persons to be members of the church. There were two exceptions to that rule: the divorced person whose spouse was put away because of fornication and the divorced person whose original spouse was not a Christian and who did not want to stay married.

The twentieth century Brethren moved gradually away from strict interpretation of the scriptures which refer to divorce and remarriage, away from an attitude of judgment, and moved toward more of an emphasis on reconciliation, compassion, and understanding. The 1933 statement emphasized repentance as a condition of acceptance into the church while still refusing to let divorced or remarried persons serve in official positions if a former spouse was still living. The 1964 report allowed pastors to officiate at weddings of divorced persons with a former spouse still living. It put the burden of deciding whether to give membership to such a couple upon the shoulders of the pastor who married them. As in the 1933 report, several scriptures were cited to

illustrate the teachings of Jesus and Paul on divorce and remarriage. The 1964 report asserted that the guidance and blessing of the church was possible in cases of divorce and remarriage. The 1977 report referred to relatively few scriptural passages, but emphasized the "spirit and tone" of Christ's teachings. This emphasis on loving rather than judging accompanied a view that saw the possibility of a divorce's being the best alternative for the well-being of all the members of a family in certain instances. The 1977 report accepted the reality of divorce among the clergy and proposed several recommendations for dealing with divorce among the "leadership."

In attempting to make their faith practical, the Brethren have found wanting an approach to divorce and remarriage that relies totally on strict biblical interpretation of New Testament passages. Their approach has been one of moving away from disciplining divorced and remarried persons by denying them membership or refusing them the opportunity to become deacons, ministers, or elders. Rather, the Brethren have leaned in this century toward a posture of compassion and understanding, emphasizing some of the priestly rather than the prophetic aspects of the gospel. Scriptures, when they are used, point to the compassionate and forgiving side of Christ's teachings. Today it is possible for divorced and remarried persons to be members in good standing, as well as deacons and ministers.

What has accounted for these changes of attitude in faith and practice among the Brethren? How can one understand or explain the present situation? What has moved the denomination from its judgmental attitude to one of compassion, understanding, and forgiveness? Before

we examine the Brethren understanding of ordination, we will look briefly at some explanations for changes in Brethren practices over the years.

#### H. EXPLANATIONS FOR THE CHANGES OF PRACTICE HISTORICALLY

According to Brethren historian Floyd Mallott, two things determine the course of a movement: the forces "within itself and the influences that come upon it from without."<sup>46</sup> Often it is difficult to separate distinctly the internal factors from the external ones. One of the events that must be discussed if one is to understand the twentieth century Brethren is the three-way schism that occurred between 1880 and 1882. Both internal and external factors played a part in that division.

##### 1. The Division of 1880-1882

a. The Old Orders. This was the smallest group, numbering about four thousand members and comprising about six per cent of the total Brethren population.<sup>47</sup> The Old Orders wanted to resist any change from the old ways. Prior to the 1880s they were the group who controlled the Annual Meetings and were the ones who called for excommunication of fornicators and persons who remarried while a former spouse was still living. The Old Orders left the Brethren as a result of differences between themselves and the other two groups.

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<sup>46</sup>Floyd Mallott, Studies in Brethren History (Elgin, IL: Brethren Publishing House, 1954), p. 5.

<sup>47</sup>Dove, pp. 85, 86.

b. The Progressives. This group numbered about eight thousand members and comprised about eleven per cent of the Brethren church.<sup>48</sup> The Progressives were the group most influenced by the extra-Brethren culture. They tended to live in cities and towns and were up-to-date socially. They favored higher education, Sunday schools, prayer meetings, revival meetings, and the development of a church newspaper. They were expelled from the main body of the Brethren by a decision made during the early 1880s.

c. The Conservatives, or German Baptist Brethren. This group was the largest of the three groups and has been known as the "Church of the Brethren" since 1908. Membership in 1890 was about sixty-one thousand, which accounted for eighty-three per cent of the Brethren population. The Conservatives were less logical in their arguments and seemed more willing than the other two groups to compromise. At first they favored keeping the church intact, but as the Progressives grew more aggressive and the Old Orders more set in keeping the old ways, they agreed to expelling the Progressives. The Old Orders themselves left, and the Conservatives found themselves alone, straddling the fence. Although this account is oversimplified, it illustrates how the present-day Brethren have historically been open to compromise, feeling more comfortable with a middle-of-the-road stance.

Afraid of losing members to the Progressives, the Conservatives encouraged intercourse with the larger society and with the whole world.

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid.



Their numbers doubled from sixty-one thousand members in 1890 to one hundred twenty-eight thousand in 1926. In the same thirty-six year period, the Progressives grew also, tripling their membership from eight thousand to twenty-six thousand. Meanwhile, the Old Orders lost members; they shrank from four thousand to three thousand members.<sup>49</sup>

John L. Gillin names the "yearning for unity and passion for homogeneity" as one of the reasons for the expulsion of the Progressives.<sup>50</sup> He sees the three-way division as being positive for the Brethren, because

it enabled the Church to devote its energies to the acquisition of members; and, as there was now a greater social homogeneity, there began the growth of greater liberty, both personal and associational, in social mind and social organization.<sup>51</sup>

Gillin points out, however, that the Brethren had tendencies to imitate certain groups on the one hand and to want to be unlike other groups on the other hand. Since, according to Gillin, the socialization process is a natural one, the Brethren tendency to want to imitate others around them had a great effect on the liberalization of the church.

## 2. Factors Affecting the Brethren after the Split

Floyd Mallott emphasizes the effects upon the Brethren of industrialization. However, Mallott stresses the fact that the Brethren have been reluctant to buy into the "economico-politico-social order" by

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid.

<sup>50</sup>John L. Gillin, The Dunkers, A Sociological Interpretation (New York: published by the author, 1906), p. 185.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

asserting that the strength of the Brethren comes from their knowing that the Kingdom will come "from God."<sup>52</sup> Even though the Brethren have taken a "mild and accomodating" attitude toward the society about them, Mallott feels that the Brethren have never been "assimilated in the purposes of the unregenerate world-society,...."<sup>53</sup>

What were the factors other than industrialization that have affected the Brethren? Herbert Hogan emphasizes the importance of the intellectual history of the twentieth century in its affect upon the Brethren.<sup>54</sup> Included in this area are the decision to go into foreign missions and to support higher education more strongly. The intellectual strivings arising from archaeological study and the acceptance of "higher criticism" of the Bible had their effect upon the Brethren, as did Darwinism, the Social Gospel movement and its accompanying development of social consciousness. The growth of ecumenicity, the Sunday school movement, the student youth movement, and other reform movements all influenced the Brethren to a degree. Theologically, fundamentalism had its effect, and neo-orthodoxy emerged in the 1950s and '60s as the dominant stance of the faculty of the denomination's only seminary.

### 3. Factors Affecting the Brethren Family

Frederick Dove, in assessing the cultural changes within the denomination, surveyed in 1932 a random sampling of Brethren congregations

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<sup>52</sup>Mallott, p. 163.    <sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 295.

<sup>54</sup>Herbert Hogan, "The Intellectual Impact of the Twentieth Century on the Church of the Brethren," Ph.D. Dissertation, Claremont Graduate School, 1958.

and discovered that in spite of those cultural changes, the divorce rate for the Brethren for the years 1922-31 was only one-third to one-fourth that of the U. S. population as a whole.<sup>55</sup> Dove proposes several possible explanations for the Brethren divorce rate's being so low. (1) The positive teaching against divorce made it seem morally wrong and socially disgraceful. (2) As a rural population, the Brethren experienced less strain on family life than those in the cities. (3) Moral and ethical standards were high among the Brethren. And (4) the Brethren teaching against "going to law" may have resulted in greater numbers of separation without legal divorce. These factors, Dove argues, encouraged Christian grace, tolerance, and compatibility in family life, in spite of the fact that the Brethren were being challenged by the liberalizing influences in the society. In addition to that, the fact that divorce was expensive, that the path of least resistance may have been separation without legal divorce, and that the agricultural depression may have kept many Brethren families together, all went together to keep the divorce rate low among the Brethren.

Dove argues, and this writer agrees, that the socialization process experienced by the Brethren does not necessitate the annihilation of group patterns. Rather,

it simply emphasizes the necessity of an orderly synthesis of them. Religious groups can retain their identity and develop distinctive cultural patterns. But only the patterns of life which provide for useful social adaptation can have a fair chance to survive.<sup>56</sup>

Dove believes that the Brethren need to keep pace with the "major social

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<sup>55</sup>Dove, p. 225.    <sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 233.

trends." Even though the Brethren insistence on not allowing divorce has changed, other traits of the Brethren have survived and have helped the Brethren maintain a distinctiveness. These traits are: (1) a doctrine of nonresistance and an uncompromising condemnation of war; (2) a principle of plain and simple living; (3) a democratic spirit in meetings and religious services; and (4) unconditional acceptance of the New Testament as the only valid creed. Even if it is "impossible for the Brethren to remain in any real sense a 'separate people,'" it is possible for them to maintain a certain degree of distinctiveness as a denomination.<sup>57</sup>

We have seen some of the factors that have affected the Brethren as they have changed over the years. What may have moved the Brethren internally as much as the external factors can be seen partly in their arguments during the debate at the 1899 Annual Meeting over the decision of whether to allow persons guilty of fornication who were "penitent" to be members of the church.

#### 4. Brethren Arguments Scripturally for and against Accepting Remarried Persons as Church Members

The 1899 Annual Meeting was the last official statement the Brethren made about divorce and remarriage until 1933. Much debate took place; the arguments voiced illustrate the kinds of internal dialogue the Brethren were having biblically.

The arguments against accepting remarried people into the church

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<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 235.

centered upon the belief that remarriage was fornication if the former spouse was still living, and that fornication was a sin worse than other sins. To let remarried persons and fornicators become members of the church--even if they were penitent--would corrupt the church and weaken it. Paul's teachings were the ones cited most often as the Brethren tried to support this position.

The arguments in favor of allowing repentant fornicators to join the church or retain membership in it stressed the adulteress pericope in the gospel of John and Jesus' attitude of forgiveness. Proponents of this position saw no good's arising from "putting away" or "avoiding" someone who is truly repentant. Keeping people out of the church does not make them better persons they argued. A Christ-like spirit of forgiveness should be the goal of the Brethren. Besides, nowhere in the scriptures is it stated that forgiveness is forbidden when there are signs of repentance. Who are the Brethren to refuse forgiveness when it is requested? If the Brethren are to expect forgiveness, they must be prepared to forgive. These latter expressions favoring an attitude of forgiveness based on Jesus' spirit gradually gained support and provided the basis for the contemporary Brethren stance on divorce and remarriage.

Is the present position preferable to the one in the past? This writer believes that it is, finding compelling the argument by Frederick Dove that only the patterns of life which provide for useful social adaptation can have a fair chance to survive.

### 5. Summary

As we have seen, the Brethren have moved officially from a

relatively legalistic stance with regard to divorce and remarriage to a rather open, liberal stance within a period of two hundred years. The shift has been a gradual one, with the most dramatic changes occurring between the statement adopted in 1964 and the one adopted in 1977.

Like St. Paul, the Brethren have tried to understand the Gospel in light of specific cultural situations. As they have responded to the pressures of culture, the Brethren have tried to maintain their reliance upon the scriptures. They have interpreted scriptural passages as allowing for divorce in certain situations--the exceptional cases in Matthew 5:32 and I Corinthians 7. They have struggled with the issue of how best to be a forgiving and nurturing church, alive in the culture and still true to their heritage.

In recent years membership of committees who draft statements for adoption by the Annual Conference have included social scientists, psychologists, and counselors as well as biblical scholars, church historians, and theologians. Ministers and lay members have helped write these reports. Historical, theological, cultural, and biblical factors have all been at work in the Brethren response to divorce and remarriage. The Brethren have experienced acculturation and they have sought to maintain a distinctively Brethren approach to dealing with the issue. They have recognized the effects of culture and have asked themselves, "How do we respond with the best wisdom of the New Testament?" Several distinctive tendencies stand out as they have tried to answer that question: (1) Confronting the brother or sister in a spirit of love (Matthew 18); (2) Interpreting the scriptures in the "mind of Christ;" (3) Emphasizing the forgiveness and compassion exemplified by

Jesus; (4) Continuing to apply the New Testament as the only valid creed; (5) Maintaining a principle of plain and simple living; (6) Keeping a democratic spirit in meetings and religious services; (7) Emphasizing the priesthood of all believers; (8) Viewing ordination as functional and not for life.

In confronting the issue of divorce and in recognizing the pain of individuals and families who experience divorce and remarriage, the Brethren are bringing a message of reconciliation and forgiveness to those whose brokenness calls out for healing. The doctrine of forgiveness has become more of a vital emphasis in the denomination. The Brethren traditionally have emphasized the need for reconciliation in the arena of international conflict. Now they are recognizing the need to work for reconciliation among their membership and the families of their members.

Even though acculturation has played a part in the development of the Brethren position on divorce and remarriage, the Brethren have tried to take seriously the pain of those who have divorced and who have sought acceptance and healing from the denomination. Their responses, based upon scripture and insights from the behavioral sciences, have meant that healing and reconciliation have become possible for larger numbers than before of divorced and remarried Brethren. This is a healthy trend in the life of the denomination, one that is preferable to the strongly judgmental approaches of the past. This is not to say that the Brethren "have arrived." There is much more that the Brethren can do to continue to respond sensitively to their members who divorce and remarry. Chapters five and six will examine those areas more closely.

For the moment, however, we turn to the Brethren understanding of ordination as a prelude to examining how the Brethren have responded to their clergy who have experienced divorce and remarriage.

## I. ORDINATION

Before judgments are made about whether the Brethren are being true to their heritage in the way they respond to their divorced ministers, it is necessary to understand the background of ordination in the Church of the Brethren. Who is a minister? How has the understanding of ordination changed over the years? How do the Brethren today understand ordination and the role of the minister?

What does it mean to be ordained in the Church of the Brethren? According to a definition adopted in 1975, ordination is

the act by which a person is formally and publicly set apart by the laying on of hands and prayer for the designated task of leadership in the church. Historically this has been thought of in terms of pastoral leadership in the local church, but today includes other related ministries in the wider church and conference. Thus ordination is an act of God through the church representing the confirmation by the church of the validity of a person's call to the service of ministry for Christ and the church.<sup>58</sup>

Even though ordination is a setting apart, the Brethren traditionally have endorsed the concepts of the "believers' church" and the "priesthood of all believers."<sup>59</sup> Because of the need for organizational order the church "calls out" certain men and women to "assume positions

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<sup>58</sup>"The Ministry: Ordination and Family Life," in "Church of the Brethren Ministry Manual," Elgin, IL: General Board, Parish Ministries Commission, 1978, p. 1.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid.



requiring special gifts and abilities."<sup>60</sup>

The scriptures cited to support ordination are Matthew 10:25 (the disciple was to be like the teacher); and Matthew 10:1; 28:19-20; and Acts 2. These passages refer to the servant role of the disciple in the "sacred and holy ministries of teaching, preaching, healing, evangelism, and caring for the church."<sup>61</sup>

### 1. Origin

Biblical tradition is the basis of the concept of ordination. Jesus Christ is the one who sets the precedent in choosing others to speak and act on his behalf. The New Testament church continued setting aside persons for ministry. Examples are the calling of Barnabas and Saul at Antioch (Acts 13:2); the choosing of Judas and Silas to accompany Paul and Barnabas to Antioch (Acts 15:22).

The Christian tradition of ordination emerged in the second and third centuries. In the early part of the second century ordination

seems to have been used because of a desire to test and give order to wandering teachers and prophets. In the fourth century the church father, Augustine, taught that ordination impressed an indelible seal or stamp on the ordained person. This, like baptism, could only be performed once and was then permanent.<sup>62</sup>

This led eventually to the view that ordination became the lifelong possession of the individual.

During the Reformation the concept of the priesthood of all believers developed. Along with it came the "ideal and practice of a

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<sup>60</sup>Ibid.    <sup>61</sup>Ibid.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid. See also Franklin H. Littel, "Ordination in the Church," Brethren Life and Thought, VI (Spring 1961), 16-27.

set-apart leadership for the function of preaching, teaching, and administering the ordinances."<sup>63</sup>

## 2. Church of the Brethren Tradition

The tradition of "calling out" persons to perform a particular service has always been for the Brethren "... an important aspect of congregational life.... Following biblical patterns, it has used the 'laying on of hands' as the act of installation."<sup>64</sup>

Two degrees of ministry developed--the "first" and the "second" degree, or the "licensed" and "ordained." In the early history of the Brethren, the "first" degree of ministry was the office of "minister." A minister could preach, administer baptism, serve communion, solemnize marriage, and assist the elder. Depending upon the size of the congregation, there could be several ministers. The "second" degree referred to the office of "elder," whose task it was to "feed the flock, preside over council meetings, anoint the sick, ... train young ministers in his charge, be a faithful shepherd."<sup>65</sup> The elder was the general manager of the congregation. If a minister proved faithful and efficient, he could be ordained as an elder. In later years, the Brethren decided to eliminate the office of the ordained elder. The terms then became that of "licensed" minister and "ordained" minister.

The scriptures used to support the qualifications and the responsibilities for ministry in a congregation were I Timothy 3:1-7,

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<sup>63</sup>Ibid., p. 2.    <sup>64</sup>Ibid.

<sup>65</sup>Church of the Brethren. Minutes. 1778-1922, p. 62.

1:18-20; II Timothy 2:24; and Titus 1:5-9.<sup>66</sup> For most of the nineteenth century ministers and elders were not salaried and not formally educated. The first record of a salaried pastor is 1891.<sup>67</sup> Most of the scriptures refer to situations where ministry in the early church was performed by non-salaried persons who supported themselves by other occupations.

It is not within the scope of this paper to go into detail about the procedures for calling persons to ministry. These can be studied in the denominational "Ministry Manual" mentioned above.

The duration of ordination in the past has been understood as a lifetime commitment. However, in recent years, policy has developed which directs individuals, in consultation with the appropriate district ministerial commission, to review ordination status. Reasons for the need to review one's status of ordination are these:

1. The ordained person has completed his/her special ministry.
2. The ordained person voluntarily chooses to discontinue his/her ministry to enter into another type of calling for which ordination is not designated.
3. An ordained person may cut himself/herself off from the ministry through some indiscretion so that usefulness for the specific function designated by ordination is no longer tenable in the community of faith.<sup>68</sup>

Because of individual situations, the categories of ordination include: active ordination; inactive ordination (a minister remains ordained, but is not serving in a special ministry); terminated ordination (a minister is no longer ordained, but may be reordained by following the appropriate

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<sup>66</sup>Ibid., 1778-1922, p. 61.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., 1965-1969, p. 411.

<sup>68</sup>"The Ministry: Ordination and Family Life," p. 3.

procedures); and minister emeritus (a minister who has retired because of age or disability).<sup>69</sup>

In setting apart persons for specialized ministry through licensing and ordination, the denomination has expected "exemplary conduct" of ordained persons.<sup>70</sup> The Brethren historically have struggled with what to do with lay persons who deviate from the ideal of lifetime monogamy. Pastors and other ordained ministers who have deviated from that ideal have caused the denomination to struggle even more than before with issues of proper counsel and discipline for ordained ministers. The next chapter examines past attempts by the Brethren to deal with divorced clergy, as well as the latest policies for confronting the fact that ordained ministers are human. If a prophetic statement is to be made to the Brethren, we must understand their policies with regard to their divorced ministers. We turn now to the third chapter.

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<sup>69</sup>"Licensed and Ordained Ministry," in "Church of the Brethren Ministry Manual," p. 4.

<sup>70</sup>"Marriage and Divorce," p. 14.

## CHAPTER III

## PASTORAL CARE TO DIVORCED CLERGY IN THE CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

## A. INTRODUCTION

Chapter two provided a background for understanding how the Brethren have responded to divorce and remarriage among their lay members. Some explanations were offered as to why the Brethren have changed their policies over the years, and the Brethren concept of ordination was discussed as an introduction to this chapter. This chapter concludes the historical part of the research. The historical part is necessary as a basis upon which one can stand in making evaluations of present denominational policies. Are present policies consistent with Brethren understandings of scripture? How do present policies fit in historically with the direction Brethren interpretation of scripture is moving?

This chapter examines several areas with regard to clergy divorce within the Church of the Brethren. What have the responses been officially to Brethren clergy who have experienced divorce? What are the present policies dealing with divorced ministers? In what ways are these responses and policies pastoral care to those divorced ministers?

## B. NINETEENTH CENTURY RESPONSES TO DIVORCED BRETHREN MINISTERS

In 1866 a query came to the Annual Meeting asking advice for how to proceed against a minister who had violated his marriage contract by committing adultery. While this example does not deal directly with a divorced minister, it does shed light on how the Brethren of the 1800s

attempted to discipline their "fallen" ministers. Here is the query and the Annual Meeting's answer:

How is it considered if a minister violates his marriage contract by committing adultery secretly, and continues the transgression for over one year, and in the meantime seeks and obtains the ordained elder's place, discharges all the holy functions of that office, preaching, baptizing, anointing the sick, solemnizing marriages, and breaking bread; can he ever be received again? And, if so, how long after having been expelled? Ans.--We think he can, as a private member, but not until the church in which he lives is fully satisfied that his conduct throughout proves that he has indeed repented. 2 Cor. 2:6-8.<sup>1</sup>

This example indicates that reconciliation is possible, but the offending minister can be received again only as a "private" member, without office.

Six years later in 1872, the Annual Meeting was asked whether a Brethren minister who had "fallen into the gross crimes mentioned by Paul in I Corinthians 5" could ever "be restored to ... office."<sup>2</sup> This was the answer of the 1872 Annual Meeting:

We think he may, under some circumstances, and the church having to act should judge whether such circumstances exist. But we think it should be, by the unanimous consent of the church, and in the presence of at least three elders. But there are some cases so grievous that we cannot receive them into their office.<sup>3</sup>

None of the gross crimes referred to by Paul in I Corinthians 5 includes the act of divorce and remarriage. The first verse, however, does make a specific reference to a man who is living with his father's wife, which would at least qualify for the crime of fornication. The Annual Meeting does not specify which cases are so grievous as to refuse a

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<sup>1</sup>Church of the Brethren. Minutes. 1778-1885, p. 120.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. <sup>3</sup>Ibid.

minister his office. The way is left open for a minister to be restored if the congregation gives unanimous support. While on the surface this appears to be a humane approach, unanimous support may be an effective way for the church to keep fallen ministers out of office.

In 1885 the Annual Meeting ruled that a divorced person who had been "separated for the cause of fornication," and had remarried, could not be elected to the office of deacon or minister.<sup>4</sup> I Timothy 3:12 and Titus 1:6 were cited to support this answer--deacons and bishops were to be the husband of one wife. This example shows the Brethren approach to dealing with members before they are elected to office. It says, however, nothing about what to do if an already-elected deacon or minister experiences divorce or remarriage. It is safe to assume that the matter would have to come before the congregation, as both the 1866 and the 1872 decisions indicate. Whether a minister could be restored to office would probably depend upon the unanimous support of the congregation as well as the nature of the "crime."

Whatever pastoral care was made available to divorced clergy in the 1800s probably came in the form of discipline on the part of the congregations or by a body of elders from the district. Since this issue does not appear specifically in the Annual Meeting minutes of the 1800s, either the issue was clear--divorced ministers could not be restored to office--or, ministers did not divorce, or ministers who felt a marital crisis coming left the ministry before the divorce occurred. Given the previous discussion about how the Brethren treated divorce

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 1778-1922, p. 55.

among the laity and given that a later statement in 1933 made it clear that remarried members could not be eligible for the office of deacon or minister, it should be safe to assume that any minister who remarried, if he had a former spouse still living, could not serve as a minister. It is still not clear, however, whether any divorced ministers of the 1800s who chose not to remarry were ever able to serve as ministers in local congregations.

#### C. TWENTIETH CENTURY RESPONSES TO DIVORCED BRETHREN MINISTERS

For three years in a row, 1975, 1976, and 1977, reports were adopted at the Annual Conferences that dealt specifically with how to respond to Brethren ministers who experience divorce.<sup>5</sup> Minutes from the Conferences of 1947 and of 1957, which contained procedures for implementing discipline for ministers, served as the bases for the 1975-77 policy statements, even though they did not mention divorce specifically as a reason for disciplining a minister.<sup>6</sup>

The 1947 report, "Counseling and Discipline," defined the purpose and function of counseling and discipline for ministers, listed the agencies for and the subjects of those aspects of ministry. With regard to officials in the church (deacons, ministers, and elders), there were

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<sup>5</sup>These reports are compiled as part of the "Church of the Brethren Ministry Manual," Elgin, IL: General Board, Parish Ministries Commission, 1978. The 1975 report is entitled "The Ministry: Ordination and Family Life." The 1976 report is "Discipleship and Reconciliation," accepted as amended at the 1977 Annual Conference. The 1977 report is "Marriage and Divorce: Special Problems for Leadership."

<sup>6</sup>Church of the Brethren. Minutes. 1947, pp. 72-75; Ibid., 1957, p. 63.



four causes for counseling and discipline:

1. Persistent neglect of duties of the office.
2. Disseminating doctrines contrary to the beliefs and practices of the Church of the Brethren.
3. Failure to maintain exemplary Christian family relations in harmony with the teachings of I Timothy 3:1-9 and Titus 1:5-9.
4. Insubordination and failure to comply with the established doctrines and practices of the Church of the Brethren.<sup>7</sup>

The basic function of counseling and discipline was for "(1) instruction and growth; and (2) correction and redemption."<sup>8</sup> If there were offenses by ordained ministers and/or elders, the district elder's body had the responsibility to investigate reports of any such offenses that came to them in writing. The elders' body had the power to make the decision regarding what action to take against an offending minister or elder: exoneration, removal from office, reinstatement, or any other penalty deemed appropriate.<sup>9</sup> If the offending party was not satisfied with the decision of the elders' body, he or she had the right of appeal to the Standing Committee of the Annual Conference.

In 1957 a report was adopted by the Annual Conference which redefined the three degrees of ministry--the licensed ministry, the ordained ministry, and the ordained eldership.<sup>10</sup> It was here reaffirmed that one of the functions of the eldership was to consider matters of discipline regarding ministers and elders. No mention specifically was made as to divorce among ministers as a cause of discipline, although it was assumed according to I Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6 that officials in the church be the husband of one wife.

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 1947, p. 74.    <sup>8</sup>Ibid., 1947, p. 73.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 1947, pp. 74, 75.    <sup>10</sup>Ibid., 1957, pp. 60-64.

Between the years of 1947 and 1957 the denomination produced a new manual entitled "Calling, Licensing, and Ordaining Ministers."<sup>11</sup> It was produced in January of 1961 by members of the staff of the denominational headquarters in Elgin, who worked with the "advice and counsel of the regional secretaries, the officers of the Pastors' Association, a number of district secretaries, and representative pastors." The manual represented the latest decisions of Annual Conference regarding ordination. This manual was later replaced by the 1978 edition of the "Ministry Manual," to which we referred above.

### 1. The 1975 Report

In 1975 the Brethren adopted a major statement on the ministry, ordination, and family life.<sup>12</sup> This was the first major statement since 1947 to deal with matters of discipline with regard to ordained ministers.<sup>13</sup> The report borrowed much of its introductory material from the 1947 report and listed "marital fidelity" as "God's intention for us" (Matthew 5:27-32).<sup>14</sup>

In a section entitled "concerning deviations," several theological statements are made to support ministering to ministers who stray from the norm. The temptations of Jesus and the behavior of David at

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<sup>11</sup>"Calling, Licensing, and Ordaining Ministers," Elgin, IL: Church of the Brethren General Offices, 1961.

<sup>12</sup>"The Ministry: Ordination and Family Life," pp. 1-8.

<sup>13</sup>Other reports included a 1958 report on women in ministry; a 1956 report on how to receive ministers from other denominations; and a 1957 report on a new basis for eldership.

<sup>14</sup>"The Ministry: Ordination and Family Life," p. 4.

"the height of his leadership" are referred to as an indication that leaders do face temptation and sometimes succumb to it.<sup>15</sup> The report affirmed that God does not desert those in trouble, and that we also ought not to desert ministers in trouble. Often the approach to deviant ministers should be one of confronting, of raising questions and clarifying issues so that "those who deviate recognize themselves in their digression and prescribe their own retribution and reconciliation."<sup>16</sup> This can set the stage for "judgment, confession, and repentance," and can enable "something creative and redemptive" to happen.<sup>17</sup>

Theologically, the basis for proceeding when there is a deviation by an ordained minister is found in Matthew 18:15-17, a favorite passage of the Brethren:

Matthew 18:15-17 offers some advice. First it suggests one-to-one confrontation, which in Christ's method would involve pointing up the problem and considering the options available. This may need to involve one or two others to confirm what the difficulty seems to be and to witness to its meaning in the life of the group. Only when this fails is the entire group involved.

... Brokenness not recognized hinders the development of God-given potential ...; brokenness acknowledged can open the way for God's grace to transform a life, and with it other lives.<sup>18</sup>

Here is the recognition of the need for confrontation as a first step in the acknowledgment of brokenness, which can then lead to transformation.

The remainder of the 1975 report consists of "preventative and instructional counsel and discipline."<sup>19</sup> Several ways are named in which help can be made available to ministers before a crisis occurs: (1) support groups of ministers can get together to help themselves and each

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid.    <sup>16</sup>Ibid.    <sup>17</sup>Ibid.    <sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 5.    <sup>19</sup>Ibid., pp. 6-8.

other; (2) individuals may help themselves when support groups are not available; (3) families of ministers can help; (4) congregations can be sensitive to the needs of the minister and his or her family; (5) the District can provide needed services; and (6) the denominational headquarters and the seminary can help. Over fifty possible ways are listed that individuals and other groups within the denomination can provide counsel and discipline that will be "preventative and instructional." The need by the Brethren to translate their theology into practical suggestions for action certainly shows itself in this report!

## 2. The 1976 Report

This report, ammended a year later at Annual Conference, is entitled "Discipleship and Reconciliation."<sup>20</sup> The introduction emphasizes that the choice of words in the title is intentional. "Discipleship" replaces the former word, "counseling," and "reconciliation" replaces "discipline." The reasons given are that

The word discipline carries widely varying meanings and has become associated frequently with negative, unloving, and punitive overtones. Counseling, ... , often implies "pressuring" and "advice-giving" rather than the way the word is understood professionally. Discipleship and reconciliation, biblical and positive words, are consistent with our heritage.<sup>21</sup>

The purpose of the report is to provide guidelines to "enable members of the body of Christ to confront, instruct, support, admonish, hold accountable, and discipline one another."<sup>22</sup> Such guidelines are intended for

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<sup>20</sup>"Discipleship and Reconciliation," pp. 1-5.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 1.    <sup>22</sup>Ibid.

the "welfare of one another and for the covenant community."<sup>23</sup>

Theologically speaking, when disciples, persons who have responded to Christ's call, accept responsibility for leadership or "set-apart ministries," they are to

- exhibit, ..., growth in terms of training, skill, maturity, insight, integrity, and commitment (I Timothy 4:6-10);
- exhibit spiritual, moral, and ethical values which are exemplary and challenging in the Christian community (Galatians 5:16, 22-26);
- be accountable to their brothers and sisters (Colossians 3:12-13; I Peter 5:2-4. Jerusalem Bible).<sup>24</sup>

When brokenness occurs within the life of the church, everyone is called to be a healing agent, according to 2 Corinthians 5:18-20. The report encourages all disciples to make "sincere attempts at reconciliation involving self, others, and God through prayerful confrontations and loving acceptance and concern."<sup>25</sup> It is possible that through such encounters, "persons experience change and reconciliation and the faith community grows spiritually (2 Corinthians 2:5-11).<sup>26</sup>

The report makes a list of the causes of brokenness, similar to the one above (page 63). Guidelines are given for ways in which the faith community can facilitate discipleship and reconciliation among laity and clergy alike. Discipleship can be facilitated by the faith community's providing training, encouraging support groups, reviewing membership expectations, and developing a "warm, joyful climate of love, support, prayer, and sensitivity to the guidance of God (Romans 12:6-21; Galatians 5:22-25)."<sup>27</sup> To facilitate reconciliation means to encourage ministers to develop trusting relationships with the congregation or

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid.    <sup>24</sup>Ibid., pp. 1,2.    <sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 2.    <sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

"some designated group within it;" to become involved in support groups of various kinds. It means to encourage districts to provide opportunities for counseling by others who are not executives involved in the placement process. Districts are also urged to appoint a continuing "Committee on Discipleship and Reconciliation" to implement procedures to effect reconciliation when concerns are brought to the District Board.

The conclusion of the report sets forth some of the theology implicit in the approach taken. Every person is considered a minister in the body of Christ. Because we are human, we are part of the brokenness of the world and of the church. Since we are weak and at times recognize our own weaknesses, we are often "reluctant to be openly and relationally confrontive when the weaknesses, failures, and sins of others in the faith community cause brokenness."<sup>28</sup> Remarks about the meaning of discipleship and reconciliation form the conclusion of the report:

Discipleship means accountability not only to Christ the head of the church, but to one another. As erring lay and set-apart ministers, conscious of our sins, humble, and penitent in our attitude, in need of God's grace and forgiveness, we act upon the authority of the covenant community and in the name of Christ who called the community into being and us into it. This tempers our attempts at reconciliation with patience and mercy and tends to make our actions loving and redemptive. Ephesians 4:2, 15, 32; I Corinthians 13.<sup>29</sup>

When this report was adopted, it replaced the section on "Counseling and Discipline" in the "Manual of Brotherhood Organization and Polity." This signified another move toward compassion in the face of

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 5.    <sup>29</sup>Ibid.

a situation involving confrontation and judgment, a move toward positive words (discipleship and reconciliation) rather than negative ones (counseling and discipline). The choice of words reflected an attitude of understanding, based upon the scriptures and the Brethren tradition.

### 3. The 1977 Report

The 1977 report was the most specific attempt in the history of the Brethren to deal with the issue of ministers who divorce.<sup>30</sup> The subtitle of the closing section of the report, "Marriage and Divorce: Special Problems for Leadership," reflects the specific treatment of the subject.

Acknowledgment is given to the belief that clergy are expected by many persons to be examples of "perfection;" that their marriages "exert disproportionate influence on other marriages in the community."<sup>31</sup> The report recognizes that there are major problems in the marriages of some clergy today, observing that ministers have been put at a "tremendous disadvantage" because many of the expectations put upon the "traditional clergyman (sic) have been put upon his (sic) marriage as well," including similar "or even greater demands ... upon the minister's wife (sic)."<sup>32</sup> The report admits that there have been restrictive attitudes by the church that have inhibited the "creative expression" of of the clergy couple's "individuality" and "sexuality." These attitudes

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<sup>30</sup>"Marriage and Divorce: A Biblical Guide to Caring and Healing in the Family of Faith," Elgin, IL: Brethren Press, 1977.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 12.    <sup>32</sup>Ibid.

have resulted in problems that have been neglected, ignored, glossed over or denied."<sup>33</sup> A call is made to the church to "make a new thrust forward in regard to clergy marriages."<sup>34</sup>

Given this situation regarding clergy marriages, several recommendations are made as preventative measures. They include (1) implementing the 1975 report on "ordination and family life," section seven; (2) involving seminary students and spouses in models of marriage education "undergirded with theological exploration;" (3) giving pastoral marriages support before and during a crisis from someone other than the person involved in pastoral placement; and (4) encouraging congregations to reexamine expectations of pastoral leadership and review pastoral contracts to include financial support for growth and marriage enrichment experiences, time and money for pastoral families to deal with enrichment or crisis, and clear delineation of "expectations of the role of the spouse."<sup>35</sup> The report recognizes the fact that brokenness and divorce will result even in spite of the church's best efforts to seek wholeness and reconciliation. When times of crisis or brokenness do occur in a pastor's marriage which may prevent "effective leadership within the congregation, district and/or denomination," very specific recommendations are made as to the procedures to be followed.<sup>36</sup>

The first recommendation to pastors who feel that divorce is "imminent" is that they should "take the initiative" to inform their congregational supervisory committee and to initiate conversations with the district executive, so that the district can begin to implement the

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid.    <sup>34</sup>Ibid.    <sup>35</sup>Ibid.    <sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 13.



procedures in the paper on "discipleship and reconciliation."<sup>37</sup> The report points out that the district, which works on the ministerial status of the ministers involved, and the church, which works with the pastor regarding continuing employment, "will need to be in close communication with each other."<sup>38</sup>

The second recommendation of the 1977 report encourages pastors to "seek the counsel of the appropriate congregational committee as to the effect of the divorce on his/her employment relationship with the congregation."<sup>39</sup> The options suggested are the following:

- a. Renegotiation of the relationship with the local church to continue on a full-time indefinite basis with appropriate procedure for congregational support and action, pending favorable District Board action on ministerial status.
- b. Temporary leave of absence from active pastoral duties while decisions on the future of the relationship are in process.
- c. Renegotiation of the employment relationships by a contract for a specific time, for example one year, with review possibilities by either the pastor or the congregation. Such a renegotiation would require appropriate procedures for congregational support.
- d. Resignation by the pastor with an effective date which would be far enough in the future to allow for personal, family, and vocational adjustments.
- e. Immediate resignation with the congregational option of a vote to call the pastor again to serve the congregation.<sup>40</sup>

The third recommendation involves the congregational committee, "caring and skillful members" of which "shall devise a means of sharing the information with the congregation and the district in ways which respect the privacy of the persons involved."<sup>41</sup> This committee is to indicate "next procedures, and provide opportunities for church members to share their concern with members of the committee in either formal

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid.    <sup>38</sup>Ibid.    <sup>39</sup>Ibid.    <sup>40</sup>Ibid., pp. 13, 14.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

or informal settings."<sup>42</sup> In most cases, this is the committee that regularly relates most directly with the minister on matters of employment, contracts, and the like.

The final recommendation made by the 1977 report deals with the situation involving the remarriage of a pastor. If a remarriage occurs, the report merely encourages "open communication ... between that person and the appropriate congregational and/or district committees."<sup>43</sup>

The report concludes with an exhortation to all to begin to see the pastor and spouse "as first of all male and female, with the same drives, needs and wants as any other human beings."<sup>44</sup> That's being the case, those things said about divorce and remarriage in relation to church members apply also to the clergy couple. For the clergy couple, the church as a faith community has a "singular opportunity and responsibility to become the extended family within which they may move toward wholeness and fulfillment."<sup>45</sup> At best, the "wholeness and creativity" in the marriage of the clergy couple "will be reflected many times over in the lives and marriages to whom they minister."<sup>46</sup>

The above are some of the ways the Church of the Brethren has tried to respond to its ministers who experience divorce. In what ways can these responses be considered pastoral care to divorced clergy? How do we understand pastoral care? The next section deals with those questions.

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid.      <sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.      <sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

#### D. THE BRETHREN RESPONSES TO THEIR DIVORCED MINISTERS AND PASTORAL CARE

William Clebsch and C. R. Jaekle define pastoral care as those "... helping acts directed toward the healing, sustaining, guiding, and reconciling of troubled persons."<sup>47</sup> Wayne Oates emphasizes at one point that pastoral care may include the "confronting of each other as persons."<sup>48</sup> Howard Clinebell adds the dimension of spirituality, saying that the uniqueness of pastoral care lies in its goal of helping to remove the "blocks that inhibit spiritual growth."<sup>49</sup> It can be shown that the Brethren historically have attempted to incorporate these characteristics of pastoral care into their official responses to divorced Brethren ministers.

The early responses of the Brethren can be seen as ones of confronting, guiding, reconciling. In the decisions of 1866 and 1872 it was possible for a minister to be reconciled to his congregation if he repented and if the congregation were fully satisfied of his repentance. The ordained elders of the church were able to do the confronting and provide any guidance that may have been deemed necessary. It must be remembered, however, that the early Brethren tended to be rather judgmental and confronting and in some cases legalistic about not allowing divorced persons to be ministers. Much of the "pastoral care" of the

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<sup>47</sup>William Clebsch and C. R. Jaekle, Pastoral Care in Historical Perspective (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1964), chapter one.

<sup>48</sup>Wayne Oates, An Introduction to Pastoral Counseling (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1959).

<sup>49</sup>Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., Basic Types of Pastoral Counseling (New York: Abingdon Press, 1966).

early Brethren toward divorced ministers may have been that of confronting and of not allowing ministers to keep their ordinations. Any reconciliation that would take place depended upon the minister's attitude of repentance as well as the congregation's willingness to accept the repentance. Clebsch and Jaekle point out that the reconciling mode of pastoral care involves discipline, confession, penance, and forgiveness,<sup>50</sup> all of which are characteristics the nineteenth century Brethren emphasized in their discipline of lay members and ministers alike. These needed to be present for reconciliation to occur. Confrontation was probably the dominant mode of pastoral care during the 1800s.

Turning to the twentieth century, we see that the 1975 report includes several characteristics of pastoral care--confrontation, sustaining, guiding, and reconciling. Matthew 18 is cited as the biblical basis for the need to confront ministers who deviate from the norm of marital fidelity. Sustaining and guiding are characteristics present in the section of the report entitled "preventative and instructional counsel and discipline." Reconciling is seen as the hoped-for outcome of the process that starts with confrontation. Confrontation can help the ministers in question see themselves more clearly in their "digression" and help them prescribe "their own retribution and reconciliation." Judgment, confession, and repentance can then occur, enabling "something creative and redemptive" to happen (see page 65).

The 1976 report, by providing guidelines by which church members can "confront, instruct, support, admonish, hold accountable, and

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<sup>50</sup>Clebsch and Jaekle, part 3.

discipline one another" exhibits an attempt to furnish several aspects of pastoral care--those of sustaining, guiding, and reconciling.<sup>51</sup> The call is also given for members to be healing agents who might help the community grow spiritually through their attempts at reconciliation. Here the Brethren articulate a desire to work toward healing and reconciliation, recognizing that both confrontation and support, or sustaining, are necessary if reconciliation and spiritual growth are to occur.

The 1977 report by its title emphasizes an intent to provide "caring and healing." Recommendations that include preventative measures try to get at the pastoral care aspect of sustaining and guiding. The recommendations governing procedures to take when a divorce is imminent involve the modes inherent in reconciling--confession, penance, discipline by the church, and/or forgiveness. The report calls the laity to minister to clergy in times of marital crisis, to provide, in a sense, pastoral care to the pastor and his/her family. This can be the kind of caring that can lead to "wholeness," not only spiritual and emotional, but also physical.

In summation, we have seen that pastoral care involves the characteristics of healing, sustaining, guiding, reconciling, confronting, and removing blocks that inhibit spiritual growth. The Brethren, in their attempts to respond to their divorced ministers, have over the years responded in ways embodying those aspects of pastoral care. At times the Brethren emphasized more strongly the confronting and the guiding. In later years, more emphasis has been placed upon sustaining, reconciling,

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<sup>51</sup>"Discipleship and Reconciliation," p. 1.

and healing, with the recognition that confronting is often the first step toward reconciliation and healing, both emotionally and spiritually.

With the end of this chapter we end the historical examination of the Church of the Brethren. The next step is to explore the present situation of the Brethren and their attempts to provide pastoral care to their divorced and remarried ministers. That will be done through the evaluation of a survey answered by over twenty Brethren ministers who were divorced since 1950. We turn now to chapter four.

## CHAPTER IV

A SURVEY OF CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN MINISTERS  
DIVORCED BETWEEN 1950 AND 1979

## A. INTRODUCTION

Chapter two examined historically the official denominational responses to marriage, divorce, remarriage, and ordination among the Brethren laity. Several explanations were offered as to why the Brethren have changed their official positions on these issues over the years. Chapter three looked specifically at the Brethren responses to divorced ministers and at how those responses could be seen as examples of pastoral care. This chapter is an analysis of the data gathered from twenty-three ordained and formerly ordained divorced Brethren ministers who responded to a questionnaire.

There are several reasons for surveying divorced Brethren ministers. One reason is to test the hypotheses stated in chapter one: that (1) there will be a significant difference between two groups of divorced ministers--those who followed the actions recommended by the 1977 Annual Conference when they divorced and those who did not follow the recommendations, the former's experiencing caring and healing at higher levels than the latter--and (2) with regard to behavior that is congruent with the actions recommended in the 1977 report, there will be a significant difference between those ministers who were divorced before 1970 and those who were divorced after 1970, with the more recently divorced group's reporting higher levels of congruence between their own behaviors and the behaviors recommended by the Annual Conference

report of 1977. These hypotheses were formulated as a way of putting into researchable form the problem of this dissertation. That problem is to discover whether the Brethren are able to make their faith practical as they respond to their divorcing, divorced, and/or remarried ministers. The recommendations adopted at the 1977 Annual Conference were intended to bring caring and healing to divorced persons, including divorced ministers.<sup>1</sup> If it can be shown that caring and healing is present when the recommendations are followed and absent when the recommendations are not followed, then there is an indication that the Brethren are responding positively to the needs of their divorced ministers. This in turn would indicate that the Brethren are making strides to make their faith practical, since the recommendations are based upon theological understandings of marriage and divorce. And this is an important task to complete, for it forms that basis upon which pastoral care can make evaluative statements in fulfilling a prophetic role with regard to the Brethren. The questionnaire has therefore been designed to show the extent to which (1) Brethren ministers who are divorced had actually acted in ways recommended by the 1977 report, and (2) Brethren ministers had experienced caring and healing both from denominational and extra-denominational sources.

Besides the reasons just mentioned, surveying divorced Brethren ministers will generate data about a group about which little is known. How many divorced Brethren ministers are there? How many are still employed as pastors of local congregations? What other kinds of jobs do

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<sup>1</sup>"Marriage and Divorce: A Biblical Guide to Caring and Healing in the Family of Faith," Elgin, IL: Brethren Press, 1977.



they now have? How many have remarried? What ages are they? How many are still actively ordained? What kinds of reactions do they have toward the Church of the Brethren? The background information requested on the questionnaire provides answers to some of these questions. Although not all of the information requested on the questionnaire is necessary to test the stated hypotheses, it may prove useful in other ways to the Church of the Brethren.

#### B. RESEARCH DESIGN/METHODOLOGY

Several steps were taken in the design and distribution of the questionnaire. First, the Annual Conference report of 1977 was examined regarding the procedures recommended for pastors when they face marital crisis or divorce. The four recommendations of the report in the section "Special Problems for Leadership" pertaining to "times of crisis and brokenness in the pastor's marriage," were chosen for use on the questionnaire.<sup>2</sup> These four recommendations were broken down into seven separate statements, four pertaining to actions that the divorcing pastor is to take, and three pertaining to actions that the congregations or employers are to take.<sup>3</sup> On the questionnaire the statements were worded to include "employer" in cases where the divorced ministers were not employed by local congregations at the times of their divorces or remarriages.

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>3</sup>See Appendix A. Section B includes the four statements pertaining to action recommended for divorcing pastors. Section C refers to action by the congregation, district, or other employer.

The questionnaire was designed in consultation with Dr. Thomas Harvey, a colleague who is director of Research, Evaluation, and Quality Assurance at the University of LaVerne. It was given to a panel of four experts who suggested several changes. The questionnaire was then field tested with a group of five divorced ministers from non-Brethren denominations and one Church of the Brethren minister who is very familiar with the 1977 report and with Brethren polity. The instrument was modified further and then prepared for mailing to the list of divorced ministers in the Church of the Brethren.

Before the questionnaire was designed, it was necessary to get a list of divorced Brethren ministers. A list was compiled in consultation with J. Bentley Peters, Consultant for Ministry at denominational general offices in Elgin, Illinois. Twenty-eight names were gathered. Peters wrote letters to the divorced ministers on the list to introduce this writer and to solicit their cooperation in participating in the survey. Of those twenty-eight persons, twenty agreed to participate in the study, two refused, and six made no reply.

With each of the questionnaires was sent a handwritten, personal letter from this writer to the twenty ministers who had agreed to participate in the study. All twenty of those questionnaires were returned. Peters sent questionnaires to the six persons who did not respond to the initial inquiry. Of these six, three completed questionnaires and returned them. Questionnaires were not sent to the two persons who indicated a refusal to participate in the survey. Twenty-three questionnaires were therefore returned out of a total of twenty-six that were distributed. This is a return rate of 88.5% (see appendix B, section H).

C. RESULTS<sup>4</sup>1. Background Information

The mean age of divorced Brethren ministers is forty-five, the youngest being thirty-one and the oldest, sixty-two. Most of the respondents had acquired either the M.Div. degree (15) or the B.D. (4). Several have masters degrees in another area (6). Other degrees represented are the D.Rel., M.Th., S.T.M., Ph.D., and a masters in Christian education. Nineteen of the respondents are still ordained: fifteen have "active" ordination status and four, "inactive" status. Three persons have had their ordinations terminated. One of the ministers is licensed, but not yet ordained.

Twenty-two of the respondents are employed full time and one is a part-time employee. Eight of the divorced ministers serve local congregations: seven as pastors and one as an assistant pastor. One of the seven is also a part-time district executive. Fifteen of the respondents are employed in a variety of other positions: parole officers, chaplains, teachers, and others. At the time of, or just prior to, divorce or separation, eighteen of the respondents had been employed either by a local congregation or by a Church of the Brethren college, seminary, district office, or the General Board.

The longest anyone has been employed in his or her present position is twelve years. Over one-half of the respondents have made job changes within the past four years (13).

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<sup>4</sup>See Appendix B for a more detailed presentation of the responses on the questionnaires.

Thirteen divorced ministers (56.5%) were employed at places other than their present positions at the time of their divorce. Of the ministers who have remarried, nine (60%) are still at the same place of employment as when they remarried.

Twenty-one of the divorces (91.3%) have taken place since 1970. One minister was divorced in 1967 and one in 1950. Ten divorces (43.5%) have occurred within the last four years.

Fifteen of the twenty-three divorced Brethren ministers (65.2%) have remarried. Twelve of these remarriages (80%) took place within two years of the date of the final decree of the divorce.

## 2. Actions Taken by Divorced Brethren Ministers

The 1977 report listed four courses of action that ministers should take when they feel that divorce is imminent. These include taking the initiative to approach the congregation and the district and keeping them informed during the early stages of the divorce.

When divorce seemed imminent, fifteen persons (65.2%) took the initiative to inform the appropriate congregational supervisory committee or their supervisor. Thirteen (56.5%) informed the appropriate district executive. During the early stages of the divorce, fourteen ministers (60.9%) reported that they kept the district and their local congregation or employer consistently informed.

Slightly over one-half of the respondents (thirteen, or 56.5%) sought the counsel of the appropriate congregational committee or supervisor to discuss the effect of the divorce upon their employment status. Of these thirteen, six (46.2%) chose options "other" than the

ones listed in the 1977 Annual Conference report. Three resigned or were asked to resign (13%), while three felt that the divorce was not an issue in their employment status at the time. Of the seven (53.8%) who did choose one of the options designated by the 1977 report, four resigned and three renegotiated their employment with the congregation, either for a specific time or for an indefinite period, pending congregational support and favorable action by the district board on their ordination status. Ten persons (43.5%) did not seek the counsel of their employers regarding the effect of the divorce upon their employment. Either they were employed in situations in which the divorce was not a factor in their jobs (five, or 50%), or they talked with an appropriate committee or supervisor and worked out other courses of action (five, or 50%).

Generally speaking, divorced Brethren ministers tended to act in ways recommended by the 1977 report when they faced divorce. For each of the four actions divorcing ministers were asked to take, over one-half but less than two-thirds of the respondents took such actions.

### 3. Actions taken by the Congregation or Employer

The 1977 report recommends that caring and skillful members of an appropriate committee devise a means of sharing information about the divorce with the congregation in ways that respect the privacy of the persons involved.<sup>5</sup> Only eight persons (34.8%) reported that congregations or employers had acted in that way. The same number felt that

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<sup>5</sup>See chapter three, p. 71.

congregations or employers did not act in the way described above. Six persons (26.1%) reported that the above situation did not apply to them.

When they were asked to indicate whether the local congregation indicated "next procedures" and provided opportunities for church members to share their concerns with an appropriate committee, only nine respondents (39.1%) found that situation applicable to them. Five (21.7%) reported that the congregation had acted the way just described; four felt otherwise (17.4%).

The third question in section C asked about the actions of the congregation or employer regarding the situation of remarriage and its effect on the present job. Was there open communication between the divorced person and the employer and the district as to the effect of a remarriage upon employment status? Seventeen respondents (73.9%) said that the situation did not apply to them, and three (13.04%) did not answer. Only one person (4.3%) said "yes" to the question; two (8.7%) said "no."

In almost every one of the three situations described above, significantly fewer than one-half of the respondents (in most cases one-third to one-fifth) felt that congregations or employers had acted in ways recommended by the 1977 report. The second and third situations did not apply to one-half and to three-fourths of the respondents, who were not employed by local congregations at the time of the divorce or remarriage.

#### 4. Post-divorce Caring

Caring was explained on this questionnaire as a feeling that can

be "experienced in a variety of ways from a variety of sources." More specifically, caring is felt "... when individuals express support and love, letting you know that they understand your feelings and are willing to stand with you in whatever way they can" (Appendix A, section D). The questions in this section were designed to determine the levels of caring that Brethren ministers perceived at different stages of the dissolution of their marriages and whether there were differences in the caring they perceived from Brethren sources as opposed to non-Brethren sources. As the findings indicate, most divorced Brethren ministers experienced higher levels of caring from non-Brethren sources (Appendix B, section D).

Respondents were asked to indicate on a five-point Likert-type scale whether they experienced caring "to a great degree" (1, 2); "some caring" (3); or "none at all" (4, 5). High levels of caring were indicated by the circling of a "1" or a "2" on the scale, while low levels of caring were reported by the circling of a "4" or a "5."

Caring from Church of the Brethren sources "on the whole" was experienced at a high level by only six of the respondents (26.1%). Seven persons (30.4%) reported low levels of caring. Of the remaining ten respondents, five (21.8%) reported "some caring" and five (21.8%) did not respond to the question.

From Church of the Brethren sources at different times in the divorce process, high levels of caring were reported as follows:

before the divorce--43.5%  
divorce imminent--39.1%  
after the divorce--30.4%  
after remarriage--33.3%

Low levels of caring from Brethren sources were reported at these times:

before the divorce--26.1%  
divorce imminent--30.4%  
after the divorce--39.1%  
after remarriage--46.7%

As divorced ministers proceeded through the various stages of divorce and remarriage, there was a tendency for them to report experiencing decreasing levels of high caring and increasing levels of low caring (Appendix B, section D).

From sources of caring outside the Church of the Brethren, almost all of the respondents reported high levels of caring and a minimum of low levels of caring (Appendix B, section D). High levels of the caring perceived from non-Brethren sources were reported at these times:

before the divorce--60.9%  
divorce imminent--65.2%  
after the divorce--69.6%  
after remarriage--73.3%

Low levels of caring from non-Brethren sources were reported at these times:

before the divorce--13%  
divorce imminent--8.7%  
after the divorce--0  
after remarriage--0

The findings in this section of the questionnaire indicate a tendency of divorced Brethren ministers to find increasing levels of high caring from sources outside the denomination as they proceed through the various stages of divorce and remarriage. Conversely, they tend to experience decreasing levels of low caring from non-Brethren sources as they proceed through those stages.

The main sources of caring were reported as being those of friends (mentioned 22 times); family (16); congregation (9); co-workers,



peers, colleagues (7); counselors (5); and others (15). See Appendix B, section D for a list of the other sources of caring that were reported.

### 5. Post-divorce Healing

Generally speaking, divorced Brethren ministers have reported experiencing high levels of healing "overall" and high levels of healing from "sources outside the Church of the Brethren." Healing as a result of relationships with the Church of the Brethren sources was relatively equally divided between high, moderate, and low levels (See Appendix B, section E). High levels of healing were reported at these levels from the following sources:

High healing "on the whole"--86.9%  
 High healing, Brethren sources--30.4%  
 High healing, non-Brethren sources--73.9%

Low levels of healing in the same categories were reported at these levels:

Low healing "on the whole"--0  
 Low healing, Brethren sources--39.1%  
 Low healing, non-Brethren sources--0

Brethren ministers who were divorced found much less healing from sources within the denomination than they did from extra-denominational sources.

Those who answered the questionnaire described these main sources of healing: friends (20 times); therapy, counseling (12); time (10); prayer (6); family (4); second wife (4); staff, colleagues, supervisors (3); children (2); self-exploration (2); and others (18). Appendix B, section E, includes a listing of the other sources of healing mentioned by the respondents.

## 6. Awareness of the Denomination's Official Stand

Thirty-nine per cent of the respondents reported high levels of awareness about the 1977 Annual Conference report regarding marriage and divorce. Low awareness levels were reported by 39.1%. The remaining group (17.4% of the total) reported that they were "somewhat familiar" with the report. One person (4.3%) did not know the report well enough to offer an opinion, and gave no response.

Of the thirteen ministers who reported that they were "somewhat familiar" or "very familiar" with the 1977 report, three (23.1%) felt that the report met the needs of divorced or remarried ministers "very well." Four (30.8%) felt that the recommendations in the report met the needs only "adequately." Six (46.1%) felt that the 1977 report's recommendations met their needs "inadequately, or not at all." Ten ministers (43.5%) did not know the report well enough to offer an opinion (see Appendix B, section F).

### D. ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Do the pieces of data collected support the hypotheses that were made? Do the divorced Brethren ministers who acted in ways similar to the behaviors recommended in the 1977 Annual Conference report on marriage and divorce report experiencing higher levels of caring and healing than those divorced ministers whose behaviors were not congruent with the recommended procedures? And do those persons who have been divorced more recently report higher levels of congruence with denominational procedures?

The answer to the first question is that, "yes," in selected

instances there were significant differences in the levels of caring and healing reported from sources within the Church of the Brethren when groups of divorced Brethren ministers with high levels of congruence with recommended denominational procedure were compared to groups with low levels of such congruence. This conclusion will be supported below in section E of this chapter. The significant differences are that higher levels of caring and healing are reported by those whose behavior was congruent with the recommended policy set forth in the 1977 Annual Conference report.

In response to the second hypothesis, the answer is "no," a significant difference does not exist between those ministers who were divorced more recently and those who were divorced before 1970 with regard to the levels of congruence between their actions and the ones recommended by the denomination.

The method used to determine the presence of significant differences between variables included placing the data into the cells of a 2 x 2 contingency table. For example (Table I), the frequencies of those who scored high in congruence with recommended procedures and high in caring from Church of the Brethren sources are placed in cell A. Cell B includes the number of those who scored high in congruence and low in caring. Cell C is the frequency of those with low congruence and high caring scores. Cell D is the frequency of low congruence and low caring scores. If there is a significant difference between the high congruence group and the low congruence group with regard to the amount of caring experienced, then most of the scores will appear in cells A and D.

TABLE I

Example

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Caring from Brethren (CB) sources:			
Congruence with re- commended procedures:		High	Low
		A	B
	High		
	Low	C	D

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The statistical test used to determine a significant difference between two groups is the Fisher exact probability test. The Fisher test is used in place of the chi square test because the population is small and the frequencies in the contingency table cells are often less than five.<sup>6</sup> According to Sidney Siegel, an authority on nonparametric statistics,

The Fisher exact probability test is an extremely useful nonparametric technique for analyzing discrete data (either nominal or ordinal) when the two independent samples are small in size. It is used when the scores from two independent random samples all fall into one or the other of two mutually exclusive classes. In other words, every subject in both groups obtains one of two possible scores. The scores are represented by frequencies in a 2 x 2 contingency table.<sup>7</sup>

In our example above, the two groups are those with the high congruence scores and those with the low congruence scores. Every subject in one of those two groups obtained one of two possible scores, either high caring or low caring from Church of the Brethren (CB) sources.

The Fisher exact probability test gives one the exact probability that the observed occurrence would fall into the frequency

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<sup>6</sup>Sidney Siegel, Nonparametric Statistics for the Behavioral Sciences (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1956), p. 110.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 96.

distribution observed. For our example, the test determines whether the two groups (high congruency and low congruency) differ significantly in the proportion of high and low caring scores attributed to them.

The level of .05 was chosen as the level at which there would be a significant difference between the two groups. In other words, if the frequencies are distributed among the four cells of the 2 x 2 contingency table in such a way that the probability of that particular distribution's occurring is less than five times out of one hundred due to chance, then there is a significant difference between the two groups with regard to the variable tested.

Approximately two-hundred-fifty possible relationships between various variables were examined and tested for significant differences using the Fisher exact probability test. As of the date of this writing, twenty-two relationships were found to differ significantly at the .05 level or better. The ones that apply most directly to the hypotheses of this dissertation are discussed below.

#### E. LEVELS OF SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES COMPARING CARING FROM CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN SOURCES AND RECOMMENDED ACTIONS TAKEN

Section B of the questionnaire listed four different actions that Brethren ministers could take at different times in the divorce process (Appendix A). When each of these actions was examined individually in relationship to the levels of caring experienced from Church of the Brethren sources, two significant differences appeared (Tables II and III). The respondents who reported that they had kept the district and the local congregation (or their employer) consistently

informed during the early stages of the divorce (response "B. 3." on the questionnaire) reported experiencing high levels of caring from Church of the Brethren sources during two times: (1) before the divorce and (2) when the divorce seemed imminent.

TABLE II  
Levels of Brethren (CB) Caring before Divorce when  
District and Congregation Were Kept Informed

		Kept the district and local congregation consistently informed during the early stages....	
		YES	NO
Caring from CB sources prior to divorce:	HIGH	9	1
	LOW	1	3

(Significant at .05 level)

Table II shows that of the ten respondents who reported high levels of caring from sources within the Church of the Brethren prior to their divorces, nine had consistently kept the district and local congregations informed during the early stages of the divorce. This was acting in one of the ways recommended by the 1977 Annual Conference report. Of the four who did not keep the district and their employer consistently informed, only one person experienced a high level of caring from Brethren before the divorce. High and low levels are described above (page 85). Table II indicates that a significant difference exists between the two groups: the group following the recommended procedure in this instance reported a high level of caring received from the Brethren in ninety per cent of the cases.

Table III also shows a significant difference between the two

groups of those who did and those who did not keep the district and their local congregation or employer consistently informed during the early stages of the divorce. Of the eleven respondents who reported keeping their employers informed, nine experienced high levels of caring from denominational sources when they felt the divorce was imminent.

TABLE III

Levels of CB Caring with Divorce Imminent when District and Congregation Were Kept Informed

		Kept the district and local congregation consistently informed during the early stages....		(Significant at .05 level)
Caring from CB sources when the divorce was imminent:		YES	NO	
	HIGH	9	0	
	LOW	2	3	

Tables II and III may indicate some relationship between one's being willing to communicate about one's divorce with district and local officials and feeling caring from denominational sources. Either divorced ministers in the Church of the Brethren who had experienced high levels of caring from the denomination were more able to communicate about their divorces in the early stages, or the act of consulting with the district and the local employer may have enabled them to be more receptive to the caring that was expressed to them.

It is interesting to observe that significant differences appear only during the early stages of divorce--when divorce was imminent or before the divorce occurred. No significant differences between the two groups appear in the reporting of caring experienced after the divorce

or remarriage. This may indicate that there is still a strong feeling against divorce and remarriage among the Brethren--or at least there was at the time of these ministers' divorces--even though the denomination's present official stance is one of caring and compassion.

There were three other actions in section B of the questionnaire which referred to actions that divorcing ministers should take. None of these were related significantly to either caring or healing experienced at the various times, regardless of whether that caring or healing came from Brethren or non-Brethren sources.

After the actions recommended in section B of the questionnaire were tested individually with regard to variables of caring and healing from Brethren and non-Brethren sources, it was decided that the "yes" answers would be summed to obtain a "congruence score" for each person who answered the questions in section B. A high congruence score would be attained by answering "yes" to three or more of the four questions in section B of the questionnaire. Doing three or four of the recommended actions is considered a high level of congruence with that denominational procedure. Low congruence in this section is defined as answering "yes" to two, or fewer than two, of the recommended actions. Those with high congruence scores were placed in one group and those with low congruence scores, in another. They were compared to see if there were significant differences in the amounts of caring and healing they reported experiencing from Brethren and non-Brethren sources. Tables IV and V indicate two significant differences between the two groups: those who reported doing three or four of the four recommended actions in section B reported high levels of caring from denominational



sources both before and after the divorce at a rate significantly different from those with low congruence scores.

TABLE IV  
Levels of CB Caring before Divorce and Levels of Congruence  
with Four Recommended Actions

		Congruence: actions of divorced CB ministers; actions recommended by the CB:		(Significant at .05 level)
		HIGH (3/4, 4/4)	LOW (0-2/4)	
CB caring before divorce:	HIGH	9	1	
	LOW	2	4	

Table IV shows that of the eleven respondents who reported doing three or four of the procedures recommended in section B of the questionnaire (had high congruence scores), nine reported experiencing high levels of caring from sources within the Church of the Brethren before the divorce. Of the five with low congruence scores, only one person reported a high level of caring from the Brethren. The difference between these two groups is significant at the .05 level.

Table V below indicates a significant difference between two groups at the .05 level also. All those who had attained high congruence scores on section B of the questionnaire reported experiencing high levels of caring from Church of the Brethren sources after the divorce.

The 1977 Annual Conference report recommended not only actions that divorcing pastors should take, but it also recommended actions that congregations and districts should take in relationship to divorcing

ministers (Appendix A, section C). Tables VI, VII, and VIII depict relationships with regard to caring from the Brethren and the combined actions of both ministers and congregations. Table V, however, focuses on only the actions of ministers and the caring they experienced after divorce.

TABLE V  
Levels of CB Caring after Divorce and Levels of Congruence  
with Four Recommended Actions

		Congruence: actions of divorced CB ministers; actions recommended by the CB:		(Significant at .05 level)
		HIGH (3/4, 4/4)	LOW (0-2/4)	
CB caring after divorce:	HIGH	7	4	
	LOW	0	5	

When the four recommended actions for pastors (section B of the questionnaire) were added to the three actions recommended for congregations (section C, Appendix A) and when the respondents were divided into two groups, a high group and a low group with regard to congruence scores on those seven recommended actions, there were significant differences between the two groups in the amounts of caring they reported experiencing from Brethren sources during three times: (1) before the divorce, (2) when divorce seemed imminent, and (3) after divorce (see Tables VI, VII, and VIII). In this case, high congruence with recommended action is defined as the presence of five or more of the recommended actions; low congruence is defined as the presence of three or

fewer than three of the seven recommended actions. Respondents who reported the presence of four of the actions were not placed in either the high or the low congruence category. Again, high levels of caring are indicated by the circling of a "1" or a "2" on the questionnaire, while low levels are responses of a "4" or a "5." Those who responded with a "3" ("some caring") were placed in neither the high nor the low caring group.

TABLE VI

Levels of CB Caring before Divorce and Levels of Congruence  
with Seven Recommended Actions

		Congruence: actions taken vs. actions recommended by ministers, congregations, districts, employers:	
		HIGH (5/7-7/7)	LOW (0-3/7)
CB caring before divorce:	HIGH	5	1
	LOW	0	6

(Significant at  
.01 level)

Table VI illustrates that each of the five respondents who reported the presence of five or more of the seven recommended actions also reported experiencing high levels of caring from the Brethren before their divorces took place. Those who had low congruence scores, with one exception, reported low levels of caring from the Brethren before divorce. The differences between these two groups are significant at the relatively high level of .01. Tables VII and VIII show the same types of significant differences between the two groups when divorce seemed imminent and after the divorce. No significant differences were

found between the two groups with regard to caring from Brethren sources after a remarriage.

TABLE VII

Levels of CB Caring with Divorce Imminent and  
Levels of Congruence with Seven  
Recommended Actions

		Congruence: actions taken vs. actions recommended by ministers, congregations, districts, employers:	
		HIGH (5/7-7/7)	LOW (0-3/7)
CB caring when divorce was imminent:	HIGH	4	1
	LOW	1	6

(Significant at .05 level)

TABLE VIII

Levels of CB Caring after Divorce and Levels of Congruence  
with Seven Recommended Actions

		Congruence: actions taken vs. actions recommended by ministers, congregations, districts, employers:	
		HIGH (5/7-7/7)	LOW (0-3/7)
CB caring after divorce:	HIGH	5	0
	LOW	2	7

(Significant at .025 level)

#### F. OTHER SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES

In addition to the significant differences between the two groups described above in tables II - VIII, several other relationships

are worth noting. They are listed below. The total of all the significant results are summarized in Table IX.

1. Respondents who reported a high awareness of the procedures recommended in the report said they experienced:
  - (a) healing from Church of the Brethren sources (.05 level);
  - (b) caring from Brethren sources "on the whole" (.05 level); and
  - (c) caring from Brethren sources after the divorce (.05 level).
2. Those currently employed as pastors have a significantly higher awareness of denominational policy as outlined in the 1977 report.
3. The respondents currently employed as pastors experienced healing from Brethren sources at a level significantly higher than that reported by non-pastors.
4. Actively ordained ministers experienced healing from Brethren sources at a level significantly different from (higher than) the level reported by ministers with inactive or terminated ordination status.
5. Remarried ministers experienced caring from Church of the Brethren sources before divorce at a level significantly higher than divorced Brethren ministers who have not remarried.
6. Divorced Brethren ministers under the age of forty remarried at a rate significantly higher than ministers aged forty and older.
7. Brethren ministers divorced in 1975 and earlier have remarried at a rate significantly higher than those divorced since 1976.

The results just mentioned were obtained with the use of the Fisher exact probability test as explained above (page 90). Table IX shows the level of significance obtained when two groups were compared as to their differences in levels of caring and healing with regard to one of the variables on the questionnaire. The column on the left lists the categories of healing and/or caring that were experienced, as well as the level of awareness of the 1977 Annual Conference report and whether remarriage had occurred. The row across the top of the table contains categories of actions taken, status of employment and of ordination, as well as age, date of divorce, and awareness of the 1977 report.

TABLE IX: SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES

	High Awareness of '77 report	Kept dist. & cong. informed early	Yes to 3/4+ on section B	Yes to 5/7+ on sections B & C	Remarried	Employed by cong. & "yes" to "C.1"	Employed by cong. & "yes" to "C.2"	Now employed by CB cong.	Now holds active ordin.	Age 31-39	Divorced before 1975
High CB caring "on the whole"	.05										
High CB caring before divorce		.05	.05	.01	.025	.005	.05				
High CB caring divorce imminent		.05		.05		.025	.05				
High CB caring after divorce	.05		.05	.025		.05	.025				
High healing CB sources	.05							.005	.05		
High awareness of '77 report								.005			
Remarried										.05	.005

## G. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

1. Those divorced Church of the Brethren ministers who reported high levels of awareness of the 1977 Annual Conference report on marriage and divorce experienced significantly higher levels of healing from Brethren sources, higher levels of caring "on the whole" from Brethren sources, and higher levels of caring from the Brethren following the divorce. Most of these ministers happened to be employed as pastors at the time they answered the questionnaire.

One of the implications of this observation may be that those who chose to remain employed as pastors following the divorce (or who were asked to remain by their congregations) were able to do so because the majority of the members in their congregations may have expressed caring and/or support for their continuing as pastor. If this is true, then local congregational settings may be the key to whether a divorced minister remains as pastor or is accepted as a pastor in a new congregation.

The other side of the interpretation is that decisions made by pastors to stay in the pastorate may have resulted in the congregation's expressing caring once the decision had been made to stay. The implication here is that pastors can make decisions that may help congregations be supportive of them.

That high awareness of the 1977 report showed up mostly among actively employed pastors is no surprise, for most pastors attend the Annual Conference and would have been aware of debate on the 1977 conference report. They also receive mailings from denominational headquarters in Elgin, Illinois, regarding decisions affecting ordination

status, employment, etc.

The fact that healing from Brethren sources was felt among this group at a significantly different level from non-pastors could be due to the fact that staying connected with the Brethren by staying in a pastorate allowed for reconciliation and healing to take place rather than a departure with unresolved relationships. One pastor said in his comments: "My impulse was to flee and begin again; yet, more deeply I knew I wanted to stay and experience a resolving of relationships--not leaving at the point of brokenness" (Appendix C, #8). Those who left the pastorate, or who were never in it to begin with, may have cut themselves off from sources of Brethren caring and/or healing. As one minister put it, one who is no longer in the pastorate, "In order to alleviate the impression that caring was not felt from the church, it needs to be stated that caring was basically not sought from the church" (Appendix C, #2). If keeping in touch with the denomination is related to the experiencing of caring and healing, then divorced ministers and the Brethren as a denomination need to find ways to maintain some kind of contact in order to maximize conditions for caring and healing to be felt from denominational sources when ministers divorce or remarry.

2. Those divorced ministers who kept the district and the local congregation or their employer consistently informed during the early stages of their divorces reported experiencing significantly higher levels of caring from Brethren sources both prior to the divorce and when the divorce seemed imminent.

An interpretation of this observation is that either the ones



responding to the questionnaire had felt support from the Brethren and therefore felt freer to keep the district or the employer informed during the early stages of the divorce, or the act of keeping one's employer informed paved the way for expressions of support and caring from others who perceived that the minister was in crisis. By choosing not to keep silent about an impending marital crisis, a minister may have made it easier for others to express caring and may have made it easier to receive expressions of caring.

3. Those divorced ministers who reported high levels of congruence between their behaviors and the ones recommended by the denomination during an impending marital crisis reported also levels of caring from Brethren sources that were significantly different (higher) from the respondents who reported low levels of congruence between their behaviors and the ones recommended by the Brethren. These high levels of caring from Brethren sources were felt by the "high congruence" respondents both before the divorce and afterwards.

One way to interpret this observation is to say that divorced Brethren ministers, by acting in ways recommended by the denomination, showed a willingness to face the issue of divorce openly. This openness may have enabled them to be more receptive to caring from the Brethren than those divorced ministers who either were not in an employment position that put them into contact with the Brethren or who chose to deal with their divorces in a more private way. Another interpretation is that persons who felt caring before their divorces may have felt freer to follow denominational procedure and may have been more willing to

stay connected with Brethren than those who did not feel caring from the Brethren before their divorce. An implication here is that congregations need to find ways to express caring to their ministers when things are going well. This may make it easier for the congregation to express caring when there are times of crisis.

4. Divorced Brethren ministers who not only acted in ways recommended by the denomination, but who also were acted upon by their congregations or employers in recommended ways, reported caring from Brethren sources prior to the divorce, when divorce was imminent, and after the divorce.

Again, those ministers who were in positions in which employers or congregations could act in recommended ways may have been in positions conducive to receiving caring from Brethren sources. Staying in contact with one's employer or supervisor and having that employer act in caring ways increases the chance of caring's being felt at several stages in the divorce process.

An implication for congregations and districts is that they need to continue to find ways to respond to divorced ministers in sensitive ways. How they respond does seem to have a positive effect on the caring that divorced Brethren ministers experience.

5. The divorced Brethren ministers who were employed by a local congregation at the time of their divorce and who felt caring action from their employers reported levels of caring from Brethren sources that were significantly higher than those who were not employed by a local congregation at the time of divorce. This caring was reported as

having been felt prior to divorce, when divorce was imminent, and following divorce.

Either the caring that was felt by a divorced minister employed by a local congregation resulted in a continuing of that caring when marital crisis occurred, or ministers not employed by a congregation or Brethren institution had little chance to receive expressions of caring from members of the denomination. As a denomination, the Brethren may have to do more to keep contact with divorced ministers who are not employed by local congregations.

6. The respondents who reported that they were still "actively ordained" and also currently employed as a pastor of a congregation reported high levels of healing from Church of the Brethren sources. The ministers with "inactive" or "terminated" ordination status did not perceive high levels of healing from Church of the Brethren sources. The pastors also reported a high awareness level of the church's policy with regard to clergy divorce.

An interpretation of this observation is that divorced Brethren ministers, even if they no longer are employed as pastors, may be indicating a desire to remain connected with the Brethren by keeping active their ordination status. If district ministry commissions honor such desires and grant permission for a divorced minister to remain actively ordained, then that action may be perceived by the divorced minister as a healing action. Another possible explanation is that the ministers who keep their ordination status active place themselves in positions in which expressions of healing from Brethren sources can occur. Those

whose ordinations are inactive or terminated may have, on the other hand, acted in ways that have resulted in their receiving expressions of judgment and rejection rather than reconciliation and healing from the Brethren.

7. Remarried ministers in the denomination perceived high levels of caring from Brethren sources before divorce took place. Unmarried divorced Brethren ministers did not perceive such caring.

This difference may mean that those who have remarried had remembered the caring they felt from Brethren before the divorce, while those who have not remarried--they tend to be the more recently divorced ministers--may still be feeling more of the pain of their divorces. As a result, they may have difficulty in perceiving earlier caring responses from the Brethren.

8. Ministers in the Church of the Brethren who are divorced and whose ages are thirty-nine and younger have remarried at a rate significantly different from those ministers aged forty or older. All of the divorced Brethren ministers who have not remarried are forty years or older.

This significant difference may point to the fact that the younger ministers are less concerned with traditional Brethren values concerning the "sin" of remarriage while a former spouse is still living. Older divorced Brethren ministers may find it more difficult to disregard the traditional Brethren attitude toward remarriage. Other explanations may be that the younger divorced ministers are more marketable when it comes to remarriage, or they feel less comfortable with staying

unmarried.

9. Those Brethren ministers divorced since 1976 have remarried at a rate significantly different from those divorced prior to 1976. Of the eight unmarried divorced ministers, six have been divorced since 1976.

This observation may mean that most of the ministers divorced since 1976 have not had enough time to adjust to their divorces to seriously consider remarriage. Or, it could mean that those divorced more recently are feeling more accepted as single persons in our culture, therefore feeling less pressure to remarry.

#### H. SUMMARY

In relation to the first hypothesis, it can be said that in some cases there have been significant differences between groups of divorced Brethren ministers in the levels of caring they have reported experiencing from denominational sources. Those who have acted in ways recommended by the 1977 Annual Conference report in several instances that they have experienced levels of caring from sources within the Church of the Brethren that are higher than the levels reported by those whose behavior was not congruent with recommended denominational procedure.

Those divorced ministers who are still employed as pastors and who are still actively ordained report high levels of healing from Brethren sources, levels significantly higher than those ministers not employed as pastors or not holding active ordination status. Pastors also report higher levels of awareness of denominational policy than do

non-pastors.

On the whole, among all groups of divorced Brethren ministers, high levels of caring and healing were reported from sources outside the Church of the Brethren. This was especially true during the period following one's remarriage.

Whether one was divorced recently or many years ago seemed to have no bearing on whether one acted in ways recommended by the 1977 Annual Conference report. Younger ministers tended to remarry more frequently than ministers over age forty. And those divorced since 1976 by and large have not yet remarried.

What do these conclusions mean? Is there a prophetic word that can be spoken by pastoral care to the Church of the Brethren as it attempts to respond to its divorced ministers? Yes. Two sets of statistics point to areas of concern.

The overwhelming majority of respondents found higher levels of both caring and healing outside of the Church of the Brethren. One could have expected that result, but it does show that the Brethren still have a long way to go to be the caring and healing community of faith that they say they want to be to people who divorce. The other statistic is the relatively low percentage of pastors who were aware of the 1977 report who felt that the denomination's guidelines met the needs of divorced ministers. Even if the findings suggest that those who follow recommended procedures have a higher chance of experiencing caring and healing within the denomination, there is still a feeling by forty-six per cent (6/13) of the ministers aware of the report that the guidelines are less than adequate in meeting the needs of divorced

Brethren ministers. There is more work to be done by the denomination to discover why the guidelines are inadequate to about one-half of the respondents who know the guidelines.

The prophetic word to the Church of the Brethren, therefore, is that even though a start has been made to deal with a real human problem of divorced Brethren ministers, what has been done is not enough. More work needs to be done to educate congregations in how to be caring, sustaining, and healing to both clergy and laity who experience divorce. Chapter six gets specific about some of that work: (1) implementing the recommendations already adopted, and (2) making marriage and family life education more of a priority in terms of budgeting and staffing on both the district and national levels. In addition, more study beyond the scope of this paper needs to be done to discover why the guidelines adopted for divorcing clergy seem inadequate to many of the respondents on the questionnaire.

We have explored the official Brethren responses of the past to the issue of divorce and remarriage among the laity and clergy, and we have studied the reactions of contemporary divorced Brethren clergy to the present guidelines. We turn now to the fifth chapter, a discussion of how the two areas of history and empirical research can inform each other and can be integrated within the framework of pastoral care's role as prophet.

## CHAPTER V

AN INTEGRATION OF THE HISTORICAL AND THE  
EMPIRICAL--THE PAST AND THE PRESENT

## A. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this dissertation is to see how pastoral care can be prophetic. The Church of the Brethren's response to its divorced clergy is the issue which is addressed, the framework in which pastoral care attempts to be prophetic. Chapters two and three laid the historical groundwork, showing how the Brethren have attempted in the past to make faith practical in response to both laity and clergy who have experienced divorce and/or remarriage. Chapter four reported the contemporary situation in the denomination--reports from twenty-three divorced Brethren ministers who were surveyed regarding the levels of caring and healing they had experienced from sources within the Church of the Brethren at various stages of their divorces, and in some cases, their remarriages. If this target population, divorced Brethren ministers, reported significant levels of caring and/or healing from denominational sources, caring and healing which the denomination said officially it wanted to provide, then evidence would be present to indicate that the Brethren are being successful in making their faith practical in this one area. The evidence would be there especially if the divorced ministers who reported high levels of caring and healing from denominational sources also reported high levels of congruence with the procedures recommended by the denomination in situations involving clergy divorce.

The purpose of this chapter is to integrate the historical data,



the responses gathered from the distribution of questionnaires. How can these two areas inform each other? More specifically, (1) what does the historical data have to say to the empirical data, to the experiences reported by divorced Brethren ministers? Within the context of pastoral care, how can that historical tradition be prophetic to the Church of the Brethren today? (2) How can the experience of today's divorced Brethren ministers inform past, present, and perhaps future attempts by the denomination to make faith practical in this one area? How can the empirical data provide a basis for being prophetic to the Church of the Brethren? Finally (3) what does this dialogue, this attempt at integration, indicate about the emergence of a model of pastoral care to divorced Brethren ministers?

## B. THE PAST AND THE PRESENT IN DIALOGUE

### 1. The Past Informs the Present

One of the observations to be made from an examination of past official actions by the Brethren is that in spite of changes that have occurred over the years regarding the view of ordination and the view of divorce, an attitude persists that ministers and other ordained persons are still "special cases" by virtue of their ordination. That attitude is recognized in a statement from the 1977 report of Annual Conference:

The clergy today, as in the past, are expected to be an example of perfection by many persons. Corporately we look to them as representing the ideal standard or model of life in thought and deed. Therefore, their marriages exert disproportionate influence on other marriages in the community.

Through ordination, the minister is indeed placed in a special relationship with others....<sup>1</sup>

Ordination status means that ministers deal with their marital breakdowns in ways that other members do not necessarily have to: negotiating with the local congregation and the district regarding status of employment and status of ordination, for example. Again, this situation is recognized as normal:

As perhaps in no other profession, marriages in the clergy have been put at a tremendous disadvantage. ...the expectations put upon the traditional clergyman (sic) have been put upon his (sic) marriage as well.<sup>2</sup>

These statements say to contemporary ministers that while it may be the case that divorce is more tolerated, accepted, for them today than it was in the past, being divorced and remaining a minister still carries expectations that may not have to be met by professionals who are not ordained.

On the one hand, this difference can be easily understood, since ordination has traditionally meant a "setting apart" of people for ministry. Persons are set apart for ministry, especially for lifelong ministry, and have been viewed almost as qualitatively different from those who are not set apart. It is not surprising that the kinds of experiences and kinds of expectations mentioned above would have developed and persisted over the years. However, there is a tendency today to recognize the humanity of ordained persons and the necessity of not

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<sup>1</sup>"Marriage and Divorce: A Biblical Guide to Caring and Healing in the Family of Faith," Elgin, IL: Brethren Press, 1977, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

placing them on pedestals. The trend in the Church of the Brethren toward seeing ordination as "function" and not as lifelong status is evidence of this tendency:

We have placed upon some clergy marriages a heavy and unrealistic demand that is most difficult to fulfill. ...It is now time for us to see these marriage partners as first of all male and female, with the same drives, needs and wants as any other human beings.<sup>3</sup>

Ministers are human first of all and commissioned for service, ordained, only for as long as they function in the ministry for which they were called:

Ordination is the commissioning of a person for service. This laying on of hands for ministry has been considered by the church as a lifetime commitment. However, if the ordained person ceases to function in the ministry to which he/she has been called, his/her ordination should be inactivated or terminated.<sup>4</sup>

These statements indicate that there is hope for the ordained person to be treated as a human being with a special calling rather than one who is somehow more than human because of being ordained.

A word of prophecy to the Brethren at this point is that they need to take more seriously their recent decisions which interpret ordination as functional status. Why? Because a functional view of ordination tends to be more compatible with recognizing the humanity of the ordained person and is less likely to result in the expectations for perfection in a minister. The Brethren tradition has moved officially to adopting a functional view of ordination. That view needs to

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 14

<sup>4</sup>"The Ministry: Ordination and Family Life," in "Church of the Brethren Ministry Manual," Elgin, IL: General Board, Parish Ministries Commission, 1978, p. 3, a report adopted by the 1975 Annual Conference.

be taken more seriously, for if it is, then the Brethren may be able to respond more sensitively to the needs of their divorced ministers instead of judging them for being less than perfect as marriage partners.

The Brethren have another tradition, that of the priesthood of all believers. If that tradition were taken more seriously, emphasized more, then there might be less of a tendency to maintain the gap between the laity and the clergy. If pastoral care is to utter another prophetic word to the Brethren, it is that the Brethren need to emphasize more heavily the concept of the priesthood of all believers if they wish to minister more effectively to their divorced clergy. As long as the gap between laity and clergy is wide, clergy will be less willing to let themselves receive caring and acts of ministry from the laity, and the laity will be hesitant to express themselves in caring ways. Both of these traditions within the Church of the Brethren, if they are applied to the situations of clergy who divorce, can offer a basis upon which both caring and healing can be expressed within the community of faith.

As the denominational responses to divorce have moved historically away from ones that were predominantly confronting, guiding, judging, and closer to ones that are sustaining, healing, and reconciling, the belief has persisted that confrontation must take place and that judgment must be felt before reconciliation and healing can occur in cases of divorce and remarriage. The denominational "Ministry Manual" suggests that a "one-to-one confrontation" based upon Matthew 18:15-17 is the first step in proceeding when there is a clerical divorce.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

Because "brokenness not recognized hinders the development of God-given potential," such brokenness must be acknowledged through some kind of confrontation to enable God's grace to "transform a life, and with it other lives."<sup>6</sup> This is not to say that any kinds of sustaining or healing actions will be absent; they are to be part of the process also.<sup>7</sup> It does indicate that the divorced minister be prepared to acknowledge the brokenness of his or her marital situation--to confront the issue and what it means for continuing employment--as one of the first steps to any kind of healing or reconciliation. It then becomes possible for "all to be healing agents,"<sup>8</sup> and for the faith community to grasp the singular "opportunity and responsibility to become the extended family within which" the clergy couple "move toward wholeness and fulfillment."<sup>9</sup>

Confrontation at times does need to take place. However, if all believers are included in the priesthood and if ordination is for function only, then the Brethren need to consider seriously the possibility that all members--not just the clergy--should be confronted according to Matthew 18 when there is divorce, so that healing can occur and something creative can happen for laity, too. To require confrontation of divorced clergy more heavily than for laity serves to maintain the gap between laity and clergy, perhaps even widen it. Pastoral

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>"Discipleship and Reconciliation," in "Church of the Brethren Ministry Manual," p. 1. This report, adopted in 1976 and ammended in 1977, states that the guidelines are needed "to enable members of the body of Christ to confront, instruct, support, admonish, hold accountable, and discipline one another." (*Italics are mine.*)

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 2.    <sup>9</sup>"Marriage and Divorce," p. 14.

care's prophetic utterance here is that the Brethren should be more consistent in how they treat laity and clergy.

A question that can be asked of the Brethren pertains to how they can accept divorce among the clergy (and among the laity, for that matter) and still distinguish themselves from any of the other protestant denominations that have experienced acculturation over the years. How are the Brethren distinctive in the way they approach the issue of clergy divorce?

The Brethren are distinctive in the particular ways they respond to divorced and remarried persons. There is little question here of the denomination's returning to the time when divorced persons were not allowed in the church. The Church of the Brethren has committed itself to accepting divorce and remarriage officially among both laity and clergy, partly because it sees it needs to do so in order to survive as a Christian group within this culture and partly because its tradition calls it to minister to persons in pain. The Brethren have usually done well when it comes to ministering to those with physical needs--food, housing, clothing for victims of war and natural disaster. By choosing to respond to divorced laity and clergy with an attitude of caring and healing, the Brethren are expanding their area of ministry to include those suffering from emotional and spiritual brokenness resulting from dissolved marriages. How can this be distinctive? It can be different from the approaches of other denominations if the Brethren can really put into practice their belief that confrontation within the context of a caring faith community can lead to reconciliation and the creation of something new and positive. Because the

Brethren are a relatively small denomination and have had a tradition of being accountable to the faith community, including a narrow gap (in the earlier years) between clergy and laity, there are factors present which can make possible a unique way of responding to divorced clergy and laity. If this style of responding to divorced ministers and clergy, a style of close communication among laity and clergy in the congregation, can be emphasized, then the Brethren can remain true to their heritage and still allow for divorce among both laity and clergy. The prophetic challenge to the Brethren is to maintain the careful balance between caring and confronting in love, the balance between allowing for individual freedom of choice and being accountable to the faith community.

In summation, it can be said that the Brethren tradition of attempting to make their faith practical has led them to allow for and accept divorce and remarriage among both laity and clergy. Both internal and external factors have resulted in a shifting away theologically from an absolutist, judgmental, stance on divorce to one that is oriented more toward providing sustenance, support, and caring. Ministers are still expected by many persons to be paragons of virtue, but the recent trend of defining ordination as functional helps congregations see their pastors as human beings. If confrontation of divorced clergy is necessary as a first step toward reconciliation and healing, then to be consistent with the belief in the priesthood of all believers, the Brethren should also require a certain amount of loving confrontation for the laity. Or the clergy should not be expected to be confronted any more heavily than laity when there is divorce. To do otherwise

perpetuates a double standard between laity and clergy which already exists. The Brethren can maintain a distinctive character in responding to divorce and remarriage if they respond to divorce within a framework of seeing each member as a minister by virtue of his or her baptism, and of seeing the minister as a normal human being set apart for a specific function. The Brethren will need to continue to work on ways to help their membership, both lay members and clergy, maintain the fine balance between individual freedom and accountability to the faith community. The difficult part remains that prejudices and biases against divorce and remarriage die hard. Divorced and remarried persons within the denomination will continue to feel judgment for a time, both from internal and external sources. The prophetic word to the Church of the Brethren is that it needs to make the implementation of the 1977 report on marriage and divorce a higher priority than it is at present, for the data we have gathered indicates that the passing of that report has not necessarily meant that attitudes have changed in all of the local congregations. What does that data have to say to the Church of the Brethren?

## 2. The Present Informs the Past, Points to the Future

There are several ways in which the empirical data from the experiences of divorced Brethren ministers can inform the denomination's past and future responses to its divorced ministers. One of the ways is to remind the denomination that divorce is an extremely painful process, not only personally, but professionally and spiritually as well. As the statements from divorced ministers indicate, there is a need for



Brethren divorced ministers to receive caring:

The divorce was the most painful experience of my life thus far. ...I felt I had sinned against myself, my family, society, the church and God.

The divorce itself also has played a large part in the development of my theology and faith pilgrimage.<sup>10</sup>

I still feel my scars itch when I am in the presence of the true believers as if my leprosy somehow has not healed.<sup>11</sup>

I experienced divorce as the greatest failure of my life. Only slowly did I come to see it as a positive thing for my life.<sup>12</sup>

Acknowledgment is made that divorce can result in positive situations, but the initial pain is there with the concomitant need for a caring response to that pain.

The empirical data provide also a reminder to the Church of the Brethren that it has not in the past been as caring and as responsive to the needs of divorced ministers as have been sources outside the denomination:

The actions of my executive and the General Board were the single most contributing factors in my disillusionment with the COB.<sup>13</sup>

The lack of support I felt from the Brethren in the early stages....<sup>14</sup>

A select company of Brethren have been great.... Otherwise the Brethren have been rather silent.<sup>15</sup>

For me the problem came ... when I talked of remarriage.<sup>16</sup>

...I felt the local Church of the Brethren ... and the Brethren on the faculty at the college were terribly inadequate in their caring. The non-Brethren faculty were the most supportive during my divorce proceedings. Of the Brethren who made any contact, most of them took sides.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Appendix C., No. 3.   <sup>11</sup>Ibid., No. 1.   <sup>12</sup>Ibid., No. 8.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., No. 4.   <sup>14</sup>Ibid., No. 5.   <sup>15</sup>Ibid., No. 6.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., No. 7.   <sup>17</sup>Ibid., No. 12.

If we had not experienced real acceptance ... at the Methodist church, I think I would have given up on the institutional church--for we received none at all from the Brethren.<sup>18</sup>

The other side of the coin is that the Brethren are more caring today than they have been in the past and that caring was available to certain of their divorced ministers.

The Church of the Brethren has come a very long way over the past six years....<sup>19</sup>

The district executive was supportive....<sup>20</sup>

...the church's position has become more accepting of our humanity.<sup>21</sup>

The feeling that one is left with is that the denomination still has a long way to go to learn to deal sensitively with the issue of divorce among its ministers. Even though caring was experienced by certain groups of Brethren ministers who were divorced, two sets of observations from the empirical data support the feeling that the Brethren still have a long way to go.

When the responses of those who reported receiving caring from the Brethren "on the whole" are examined, one sees that more ministers received low levels of caring (seven, or 30.4%) than did those who reported high levels of caring (six, or 26.1%). (See Appendix B, section D. 5.) It has already been shown in chapter four how the levels of high caring from Brethren sources decrease and the low levels increase as divorced ministers move through the various stages of divorce. Compared to the relatively high levels of caring reported from extra-Brethren sources, the Brethren do not fare well in that comparison.

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., No. 13.    <sup>19</sup>Ibid., No. 1.    <sup>20</sup>Ibid., No. 8.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., No. 13.

When healing from Church of the Brethren sources is compared to healing from extra-Brethren sources, again the comparison puts the Brethren to shame. No levels of low healing were reported from sources outside the denomination, while nine respondents (about 40%) reported low levels of healing from Church of the Brethren sources (Appendix B, section E. 5.).

There is another indication from the data to suggest that the Brethren need to work harder toward implementing their 1977 statement on divorce and remarriage. Of the seventeen ministers who were employed by the Church of the Brethren at the time of divorce, only one-half of them felt that the local congregation or their employer acted in ways that were caring and skillful in respecting their privacy (Appendix B, section C. 1.). The other half felt otherwise, and one person saw both positive and negative aspects of their employer's responses.

Finally, and we alluded to it in chapter four, of those ministers who are aware of the 1977 report, six (46%) felt that the denomination's official stance on marriage and divorce met the needs of divorced and remarried Brethren ministers "inadequately" or "not at all." (See Appendix B, section F. 2.) Only three out of the thirteen "aware" respondents (23%) felt that the official stance met needs "very well" or better than "adequately," while only four of the thirteen (30.1%) felt that the report and its recommended procedures met their needs adequately. This observation suggests possibly that the guidelines are helpful but are not being implemented, or that the guidelines may be implemented, but are not being helpful to those for whom they were intended.

The results of the survey reported in the previous chapter

indicate that the respondents who felt caring and healing from the denominational sources were the divorced ministers who somehow stayed active in a leadership role within the denomination, either as a pastor or by keeping active one's ordination status. Those divorced ministers who reported lower levels of caring from the denomination were the ones who left the pastorate or who were ordained but never entered the pastorate in the first place. This observation suggests that divorced ministers will be able to remain as pastors in those districts and local congregations where they find caring and support. On the other hand, that may not always be the case. Several ministers reported that their divorces resulted in their experiencing growth and change. It may be that regardless of what kinds of pastoral care a divorced minister receives, the changes and growth that occur might have more to do with decisions to leave the pastorate than other factors present.

Regardless of the kind of care and healing divorced Brethren ministers experience within the denomination, there is evidence that the Brethren, even in the face of a relatively liberal stance on the issue of clergy divorce, still need to do more to implement their intentions. The Brethren have made their faith practical to some of their divorced ministers, but not to all of them.

#### C. MAKING FAITH PRACTICAL IN THE CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN: A PARTIAL SUCCESS

When both the historical documents and the empirical data are examined, it can be said that in some instances the Church of the Brethren has been able to make its faith practical with regard to the issue

of divorce among its clergy. In other instances, the Brethren have not done well in that area. The history tells us that the Brethren have changed theologically and practically over the years regarding the question of divorce and remarriage. No longer are the Brethren saying as they did in the nineteenth century that divorce or remarriage automatically disqualifies a person from the office of deacon or minister.

The culture has changed and is still changing. Some of the reasons for the changes have been discussed in chapter two--acculturation, a real concern for the pain of divorced persons, the use of knowledge from the behavioral sciences, and an emphasis on the doctrine of forgiveness. More ministers are divorcing in the Church of the Brethren than was true in the nineteenth century or even twenty years ago. Brethren theology has lately emphasized a supportive approach to those experiencing divorce. That approach has enabled expressions of caring and healing to be felt by divorced Brethren ministers. The most recent approach of 1977 resulted in the denomination's stating a desire officially to respond to divorced ministers and lay persons in caring and healing ways. That has been possible where divorced Brethren ministers have remained active in the pastorate and in other leadership positions in the denomination. The caring and healing have not been experienced to any great degree in cases where divorced ministers either left the pastorate or had never entered the pastoral ministry.

Where the denomination is successful in making faith practical regarding clergy divorce depends, it appears, upon the degree to which local congregations and districts communicate caring and healing acts to a minister as he or she goes through the process of negotiating

ordination and employment status during the time of marital crisis and dissolution of marriage. If caring and healing are expressed at the local and district levels, then the denomination is successful in making faith practical. Where caring and healing are not expressed and are not felt by the divorced ministers at those levels, divorced Brethren ministers may never know how it feels to experience the denomination's making its faith practical to them.

The fact that the Brethren have adopted officially a stance whereby caring and healing are the desired ends when divorce occurs increases the possibility that they can make their faith practical. That process, however, must happen at the local congregation. It must happen at the district level. And it must happen at the national level. The acceptance of the 1977 report indicates that the process has begun at the national level, and support has been voiced by representatives (delegates) from local and district levels. Now that the process has been made official, time will tell the degree to which the denomination can integrate its official position into congregational life. It has already happened sporadically. It must now become a reality in more than a few locations.

#### D. THE EMERGENCE OF A MODEL OF PASTORAL CARE TO DIVORCED BRETHREN MINISTERS

If it is accurate to say that the Brethren are only partially successful in making their faith practical on the issue of clergy divorce, one approach to take is to evaluate the model of caring that the Brethren are using. The recommendations for caring and healing with

regard to divorced clergy are but one part of a whole approach to responding to the issue of marriage and divorce within the denomination at large. Before one can evaluate that model, one must first become familiar with it. After one knows what the model is, then one can make evaluative statements to see how the Brethren might improve their partial success with translating faith into practical application.

### 1. A Description of the Model

The Church of the Brethren's model of pastoral care to divorced clergy consists of a two-pronged approach, one focusing on prevention and the other on ministering to persons after the divorce has occurred. The approach is described most clearly in the denomination's 1977 Annual Conference report.<sup>22</sup>

a. Prevention and Nurture. This part of the model includes several areas related to strengthening the faith community, encouraging the faith community to reevaluate its structures and liturgies, and encouraging congregations and districts to provide instructional and experiential growth experiences for married persons, both lay members and clergy.

(1) Strengthening the Faith Community. Since the faith community is the "key to strengthening both single and married life," (p. 1 of the 1977 report), congregations and/or clusters of churches and/or districts are urged to provide growth experiences in the area of "human relationships." (p. 3) Suggested ways of doing this include Bible study, studies of books about "relationship issues," retreats,

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<sup>22</sup>"Marriage and Divorce."

workshops, small groups, and "growth counseling," (p. 3) Examples of these include efforts to:

- (a) Study male/female relationships in terms of sex role stereotyping and liberation issues.
- (b) Strengthen interpersonal communication through experiences designed to deal with intergenerational dialogue, family enrichment, marriage enrichment, communication skills, conflict management and values clarification.
- (c) Foster relationships between single persons (including formerly married) and married persons in the life of the church.
- (d) Encourage study of legislation that has a direct effect on relationships such as ERA, Welfare, etc.<sup>23</sup>

In addition to the above suggestions, the report urges the faith community to address itself to the "fundamental growth and relationship issues related to the sexual dimension of our lives." (p. 3) A recommendation is made to the General Board to appoint a committee to "address itself in a comprehensive way to the basic issues of human sexuality from a Christian perspective." (p. 3)

(2) Changing Congregational Structures and Liturgy. Three aspects of congregational structure and liturgy are emphasized as objects for change. The first is that congregations are urged to "establish structures to assure a continuing relationship with marriages within their membership." (p. 5) Nothing specific is indicated as to how congregations are to effect that recommendation. Secondly, the marriage service is to be rewritten to "delete archaic forms and phrases which denote paternalism, inequality of the sexes, and a narrow view of relationship." (p. 5) Thirdly, the marriage service should incorporate "active participation of the faith community in the marriage celebration of the couple." (p. 5)

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 3.



### (3) Providing Instructional and Experiential Growth Activities.

Because there are many barriers that couples face in the attempt to build a fulfilling marriage relationship, a long list of recommendations is made to congregations and/or districts to encourage the providing of a variety of instructional and experiential activities to help couples make those barriers seem less formidable. These activities for the nurturing of marriages include those of "marital growth groups, instructional and experiential programs about marriage," study groups, elective church school classes, workshops, retreats, etc. In addition to a list of at least twenty-five examples of activities, the suggestion is made that each pastor and nurture commission have an up-to-date list of "competent and certified" counselors to whom couples can be referred when the need arises. To implement the types of activities suggested, several new approaches need to be taken, according to the model. They include the following:

- (a) Congregations are urged to make time available, even on weekends if necessary, for the pastoral couple's own marriage enrichment, even though the marriage is apparently already strong. This time should not be taken from vacation time or professional growth time. Nor should this imply that the pastor and spouse have serious problems in their marriage.
- (b) Pastoral couples are encouraged to seek training to co-lead marital growth events in local congregations. (Seminary and/or post-seminary training.)
- (c) Districts are encouraged to appoint (through their Nurture Commissions) a married couple who will promote marriage enrichment on the district and local level. In order to fulfill their task, this couple should receive training for Marriage Enrichment activities as well as learning how to promote a variety of marital growth events. Life Cycle Ministries is available to provide such training and can work with these couples to provide resources and ongoing support.
- (d) Congregations are encouraged to select a married couple to promote marital growth activities in the local church, seeking help and resources from their district and/or from Life Cycle Ministries. In order to fulfill their task they should be aware

of marital growth possibilities through participation in a variety of activities including a Marriage Enrichment Weekend.<sup>24</sup>

b. Ministry to Divorced Brethren. When divorce does occur, there are recommendations that apply to ministering to divorcing and divorced persons. These include the following suggested ways of providing that ministry:

- (1) Provide short term emergency child care, financial aid, transportation, housing, etc., if needed.
- (2) Maintain an up-to-date list of those persons in the community who are qualified through professional training and experience and who can provide counseling in these areas:
  - (a) Divorce counseling
  - (b) Parenting
  - (c) Financial
  - (d) Legal
  - (e) Spiritual (dealing with faith, doubt, guilt, loss of self-esteem, etc.)
  - (f) Counseling for children of divorced parents
- (3) Establish support groups for personal, emotional and spiritual support during the time of stress and continuing as long as needed and/or desired. Provide opportunities for singles to meet with all members of the faith community, both married and single.
- (4) Provide workshops and/or structured programs of education for the purposes of:
  - (a) Helping divorced persons move on to the next stage in their lives
  - (b) Using the divorce as a growing experience
  - (c) Learning how to live the single life (for a time or permanently)
  - (d) Looking realistically at remarriage
  - (e) Providing an opportunity to be helpful to each other as divorced persons.<sup>25</sup>

Other suggestions are offered for ministry to those persons who may be remarried, a church member, or a pastor. Remarried persons are encouraged to participate in marital growth group and marriage enrichment activities to focus on issues and strengths involved in a remarriage.

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., pp. 8, 9.    <sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

Church members are to take opportunities to learn to relate "with sensitivity and concern" to persons in their congregations and communities who are experiencing divorce or remarriage. They can get this education through workshops or other types of training. Pastors are to educate themselves (with possible help from the Parish Ministries Commission and/or Bethany Seminary) to gain "competence in ministering to persons prior to, during and following divorce." In all these cases, it is suggested that divorced or remarried persons could well be of assistance in planning such training events.

Finally, recommendations are made at the end of the report for those persons in leadership positions in the church. These recommendations were listed earlier in chapter three.

## 2. An Evaluation of the Model

For a denomination the size of the Church of the Brethren, this model of making faith practical to divorced laity and clergy is a very ambitious one. It does recognize the need for nurturing and for educating members of the faith community in ways oriented to breaking down some of the barriers that get in the way of fulfilling marital relationships. The model hopes to help the community be better prepared to respond sensitively to divorce when it occurs. The model provides suggestions for ministry to the persons involved during the various stages of the divorce and possible remarriage.

As we have seen above and chapter three, this model of pastoral care to divorced Brethren ministers includes action at the national, district, and local levels. On the national level money has been made

available through Life Cycle Ministries to provide training for persons to participate in and lead marriage enrichment events. The Parish Ministries Commission of the General Board is made aware of needs of divorced clergy and their families. On the district level guidelines exist for negotiating with divorced ministers as to the effect of divorce upon ordination status. Resources are to be made available to ministers and their families for counseling by someone other than the district executive, who is involved in the placement of pastors in jobs. Funds are available for those ministers who wish to try reevaluating career choices and examining alternative careers. On the local level congregations are urged to reevaluate expectations of the pastor and the pastor's family, and funds are to be made available for marriage and family enrichment events. Recommendations are made for ways particular congregations and pastors might approach the negotiating process about the effect of a divorce or remarriage upon the pastor's employment status. All the recommendations that apply to the laity at the local level apply also to pastors.

Does this model work? Yes and No. The model is consistent with Brethren theology and history in the sense that the Annual Conference is the body that has always decided upon policy that it felt was biblically based and practically sound. The Brethren have valued the one-to-one confrontation and the individual's being accountable to the larger community. The tradition has allowed for local congregations to have the power to decide on local issues--whether a "fallen" minister, for example, can still function as an ordained minister in a particular congregation. And congregations have the local option not

to follow the recommendations of the Annual Conference.

The model works in those congregations and districts which seek to implement the conference recommendations. Work still needs to be done in those local congregations and districts which resist the theological arguments allowing for divorce among the clergy. There is still resistance on the part of most married couples to participate in marriage enrichment and growth experiences that are made available within the denomination. The model works for those congregations and districts which are more open to hearing and dealing with theological and biblical issues which challenge former ways of thinking. These areas seem most often to be those closer to metropolitan areas. Most of the divorced ministers known personally by this writer are pastors in churches in urban or semi-urban settings.

Even though the approach the Brethren have taken seems to work for some congregations and divorced ministers, the fact remains that the model does not work in many other congregations and settings involving ministry. In some congregations the resistance to allowing for divorce among the clergy will remain for some time to come. The data has shown that more caring and healing is perceived as available from sources outside the Church of the Brethren than within it.

Whether the model facilitates caring and healing for divorced Brethren ministers depends on several factors. Sometimes the attitude of the divorcing minister makes it difficult for the congregation or the district to express support and caring. He or she may not be seeking expressions of caring from the denomination if a decision has been made to leave the pastorate. Another factor is how the pastor is

perceived by the congregation, whether the pastor is perceived as the "victim" of a spouse who has unilaterally decided to leave the marriage, or whether the pastor is perceived to be "at fault" in the dissolution of the relationship. A third factor, one supported by Katherine Ruark, is that congregations tend to allow for divorce among the clergy if a particular minister is well-liked by the congregation. Pastors who have trouble with congregational support prior to a divorce will likely have trouble experiencing support and caring from the congregation both during and after a divorce.<sup>26</sup>

By way of summation, it can be said that the Brethren have faced the issue of divorce among their ministers and have adopted policies and set in motion actions to deal with those situations. A model of pastoral care has emerged that can provide a framework to facilitate caring and healing by the Brethren to their divorced clergy and laity. The model has emerged from the Brethren tradition of being open to new truth, of interpreting the scriptures "in the mind of Christ," of emphasizing the priesthood of all believers, of developing a functional view of ordination, of maintaining a belief in confronting the individual in love according to Matthew 18 and holding the individual accountable to the faith community. Within the same tradition, however, are those who still want the minister to be a model of perfection, who interpret the scriptures literally regarding the traditionally-used passages on divorce and remarriage, who call for more discipline and less sustaining in implementing expressions of pastoral care. The different

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<sup>26</sup>Katherine L. Ruark, "Clergy Divorce and Subsequent Career Mobility," Ph.D. Dissertation, Florida State University, 1977.

emphases within the denomination help to account for the findings in the empirical study that show a mixed result--that some divorced pastors have received caring and healing in association with acting in ways recommended by the denomination, while others have experienced higher levels of caring and healing from sources outside the Church of the Brethren. Even though the Brethren can agree on the national level at Annual Conference to adopt an official statement that allows for divorce and remarriage among the clergy and puts into motion a model of pastoral care to divorced ministers and laity, the official position is not in reality the position of many of the congregations within the denomination. The gap between official policies and the implementation at the local level remains in many places. The word of prophecy to the Brethren is that they must remain faithful to the position they have adopted and must keep working to implement the policies until such time comes when openness to new truth indicates a different direction.

## CHAPTER VI

## CONCLUSION

The Church of the Brethren has been only partially successful in making its theology practical in the area of clergy divorce. Whatever success occurs is implemented at the local and district levels, the places where denominational policies are usually felt. Even though factors other than the denomination's policies are present in determining whether a divorced minister experiences caring and/or healing at the various stages of the dissolution of his or her marriage, what cannot be avoided are the findings that divorced Church of the Brethren ministers (1) still find much higher levels of caring and healing from sources outside the denomination and (2) are not convinced that the denomination's policies meet their needs. This study, by using the Church of the Brethren as an example, has employed a methodology to illustrate how the discipline of pastoral care and counseling can perform a prophetic function to the institutional church.

This final chapter focuses on the implications of the study, its limitations, and the areas that require further research. Examined first will be the implications for the field of pastoral care and counseling, where the methodology used in this study will be presented in greater detail.

## A. IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. Implications for Pastoral Care and Counseling

By using the Church of the Brethren as a case study in how well



a denomination makes it faith practical with regard to one particular issue, the study suggests a method for how the field of pastoral care can fulfill a prophetic function to the institutional church, a function that Seward Hiltner and Harville Hendrix both assert is needed.<sup>1</sup> Prophecy, the calling of institutions to accountability, is a role that pastoral care and counseling traditionally has not played. Even though a prophetic role is played in some instances with the calling to accountability of individuals and families in counseling situations, the history of pastoral care shows that the priestly function has been the dominant mode. History has shown that pastoral care and counseling has focused its attention on such issues as institutional chaplaincy, the training of pastors for more effective ministry, the development of pastoral counseling centers, the certification of pastoral counselors, the debate about the necessity of recognition by the state to qualify for third-party insurance payments, and the continuing question of identity—"who is a pastoral counselor?"

The methodology used in this study for fulfilling a prophetic function in the area of pastoral care includes three basic steps.

(1) The first step is the definition of a problem area to be researched within a particular denomination or congregation. In this case, the area chosen was the one of clergy divorce in the Church of the Brethren: the extent to which the Brethren are making their faith practical in that area. Once a problem is defined, (2) the second step is to decide

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<sup>1</sup>Seward Hiltner, "Pastoral Counseling and the Church," Journal of Pastoral Care, XXXI (September 1976), 146-158; and Harville Hendrix, "Pastoral Counseling: In Search of a New Paradigm," Pastoral Psychology, XXV (Spring 1977), 157-172.

on the appropriate tools to be used to research the problem area. The findings unearthed by these tools form the basis upon which any prophetic statements can be made and verified concerning the institution in question. The tools chosen for this study were the ones of historical research and an empirical study. The historical research is necessary to become aware of the denomination's past history, for no prophetic statement can be made without knowing the historical development of a group on a set of issues. The Old Testament prophets who called the Hebrews to accountability were intimately familiar with Israel's history and were aware of the original covenant made with Jahweh. Here it is important to know what kinds of past agreements the Church of the Brethren has made with its membership in dealing with the broad areas of divorce and marriage, including the specific area of clergy divorce. Once the history is known, the tool of empirical research is used to test a reality in the present. How do certain segments of the population perceive the denomination or congregation in question with regard to how well it does what it says it has agreed to do? In this case, the target population, divorced Brethren clergy, were studied to see how they perceived the denomination's ability to carry out a program of caring and healing that the denomination had intended. Were the Brethren fulfilling their part of the covenant with their divorced clergy? After these steps are taken, the third step (3) is to bring the findings from the historical research and from the empirical research into a dialogue to work toward some degree of integration. What does the tradition say to the target population about the contemporary situation? What does the situation of the target population say to the denomination

about the denomination's attempts to be accountable? The pastoral carer as researcher-prophet then has a basis upon which to call the church (or the target population, if necessary) to accountability. In these ways, the methodology just described enables the field of pastoral care to fulfill a prophetic role. As was stated in a previous chapter, the prophetic message to the Church of the Brethren is that much change needs to take place before the church is perceived and experienced as providing caring and healing at levels comparable to those sources outside the denomination. While it appears to be the case that ministers who remain active in the church and who follow denominational guidelines experience the higher levels of caring and healing from denominational sources, the majority of divorced Brethren clergy surveyed experience more caring and healing from extra-denominational sources.

The methodology just described can be expanded for continued use within the Church of the Brethren, or it can be applied to other church bodies to call the church to accountability. The area of empirical research could easily be applied, for example, to local congregations and districts within the denomination to determine the levels at which the Brethren are trying to implement their faith statement on marriage and divorce. What are the ways that congregations and districts approach implementing the recommendations made in the 1977 report? Or, instead of a survey approach, a case study approach could be used to focus on local congregations or specific districts to see the extent to which the Brethren are implementing their policy. Any number of approaches using empirical research could be used in combination with historical research to provide a picture of how the present

situation reflects--or does not reflect--the embodiment of an intended program of caring and healing within a particular congregation, district, or denomination. The area chosen could be one other than the issue of clergy divorce. How the Brethren view the authority of the scriptures as compared with the actual decisions made by the Annual Conference which are based on scripture might be an area to survey. Or, one could study the degree to which the church's official stance on pacifism and simple living is actually lived out in the lives of its members and/or ministers. Again, the findings could be used to confront the denomination on its action or lack of action. In calling the denomination to accountability, the pastoral carer as one who is doing evaluative research is performing a prophetic role.

Institutional research as a way of fulfilling a prophetic role in pastoral care has other implications for pastoral care and counseling. Using this dissertation as an example, one could use the results of the research to make a case to districts and congregations for increasing the quantity and quality of pastoral care and counseling available to its divorced ministers and laity. Results of the research might enable a pastoral counseling center to emerge where it might not have done so otherwise. If that would happen, then more pastoral counseling services would be available to individuals, families, pastors, congregations, communities, districts, and the denomination as a whole. Persons within the denomination would begin to see that there are resources within the Church of the Brethren that do provide caring and healing and that they do not necessarily have to go beyond denominational sources to seek caring when they are in the pain of a marital separation

or divorce. The development of even a few pastoral counseling centers within the Church of the Brethren can result in the supplying of resources to several congregations in a geographical area to work with other congregations on becoming more caring and less judgmental in their responses to divorce and remarriage. This can be done through the pastoral counseling center's taking of the responsibility to make available the types of instructional and growth experiences recommended in the 1977 report to help congregations strengthen the faith community as a necessary first step to providing the nurture and care to divorced laity and clergy when the need arises. In a sense, pastoral care, by using historical and empirical research to be prophetic to an institution, gathers the materials to build a case for increasing pastoral care resources so that it can better perform its nurturing, priestly, caring functions.

Another implication for pastoral care is that institutional research can help those who do counseling with Church of the Brethren ministers or lay members. It helps the counselor by providing a framework from which to understand better the context out of which a Brethren person comes with a presenting problem. Even though a counselor usually focuses on a client's feelings and the specific situation that is causing the pain, a counselor's awareness of the types of denominational resources available--or not available--to the client can be a useful source for a possible referral. Also, knowing that the Church of the Brethren has begun to deal with the issue of clergy divorce and knowing something of the nature of the approach can give one a feel for how other denominations similar to the Brethren might be dealing with those

same issues--for example, the Mennonites, or the Brethren in Christ, or the Baptists, denominations which have either sprung up from the same roots or which have similar types of church polity.

The use of institutional research to develop the prophetic arm of pastoral care and counseling strengthens the field of pastoral care by a balancing of the prophetic function with the priestly function. For too long the image of the pastoral counselor has been dominantly that of the counselor-priest, whose functions included those of healing, sustaining, guiding, and reconciling. Traditionally the priest has been seen as an "insider" whose "function is to conserve the forms of faith in the interest of preserving the substance of faith."<sup>2</sup> This in essence preserves and performs the "rituals that facilitate and reinforce faith."<sup>3</sup> According to Harville Hendrix, counseling has both a priestly and a prophetic dimension, "and it is an inadequate response to the human situation when one dimension is dominant."<sup>4</sup> Hendrix argues that the prophetic dimension of counseling is, according to Sidney Jourard's use of Abraham Heschel, "rooted in the traditional view of the prophet."<sup>5</sup> The prophet as one who is very sensitive to evil refuses to ignore it, shrieks at what he or she sees, and is committed to the highest good of which humans (and institutions) are capable. The prophet "mourns, castigates, and incites in order that mediocre men (sic) might rise to those heights."<sup>6</sup> Prophets are in a sense outsiders who are

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<sup>2</sup>Hendrix, p. 158.   <sup>3</sup>Ibid.   <sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 159.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid. See Sidney Jourard, Healthy Personality (3d. ed., New York: Macmillan, 1974), p. 343.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

threats to the status quo, outsiders in the sense of being able to achieve a perspective on the culture (or on a denomination) that enables them "to see what those more acculturated could not see."<sup>7</sup> Jourard sees the "outsider" as a metaphor of the therapist, who has to be able to achieve what Martin Buber calls "distance," but who must also have the capacity to "enter into relation" in order to have his or her vision seen and the message heard.<sup>8</sup>

In applying these views of the prophetic role of counselors as therapists to the role of pastoral counselors as prophets-doing-institutional-research, one can see certain parallels. The counselor-researcher-prophet becomes one who can have a perspective from the outside, a distance, yet one who must be able to enter into a relationship with the denomination or institution being studied. The counselor-researcher-prophet is committed to challenging the institution to reach the highest good attainable and is not satisfied with letting injustices go unnoticed. In raising to a higher level of awareness discrepancies between a denomination's official stance on an issue and the realities as experienced by members of a target population with regard to that official stance, the pastoral carer-researcher-prophet helps to restore to the field of pastoral care a balance between the priestly and the prophetic functions.

The implications of this study for the field of pastoral care and counseling include the use of one method of institutional research that can help to bring into more of a balance the prophetic dimension

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid.    <sup>8</sup>Ibid.

of pastoral care with the priestly. How this method of research could affect the Brethren was touched upon briefly in the discussion above. The next section examines in more detail implications of this study for the Church of the Brethren.

## 2. Implications for the Church of the Brethren

On the surface, it appears that the trend toward acculturation is continuing in the denomination. This trend could be interpreted as a negative one if the Brethren uncritically allow for divorce and remarriage of their lay members and clergy. If that happens, then the Brethren lose much of their distinctiveness as a denomination. However, there are positive aspects for the Brethren if they can confront the issue of divorce and remarriage for their clergy from a theological position that is consistent with part of their tradition. The Brethren have taken the first steps in doing that in their adoption of the 1977 Annual Conference report on marriage and divorce, for that report is based upon theological interpretations of scripture that are consistent with earlier Brethren attempts to emphasize the caring and forgiving aspects of the gospel. For a long time the Brethren emphasized the confronting and judging aspects of the scriptures in relationship to divorce and remarriage. This latest attempt seeks to incorporate more of a balance theologically in how the Brethren respond to the issue of clergy divorce. The problem remains, however, for that official position to become widely accepted within the denomination. This research is one indication that the Brethren, if they are to minister to the ever-increasing numbers of divorced persons, including clergy, must



find ways to translate their good intentions to provide caring and healing into concrete actions that can be felt as caring by those who are in pain. At this point, many divorced Brethren experience little caring and healing from Brethren sources and find that they have to turn elsewhere for acceptance and nurture. What are the implications for the Church of the Brethren if it can find ways to concretize its faith and its intentions to provide caring and healing with regard to its divorced clergy? There are several implications, not only for divorced Brethren clergy, but also for the laity and the denomination as a whole.

a. For Brethren Clergy. One implication for the Brethren clergy is that they can be more effective in their ministry by risking being more open and vulnerable to their congregations. They need not try to hide their humanity so much if they know that personal and marital crises do not necessarily mean that they must change jobs or alter career plans. By being able to risk being vulnerable as ministers, Brethren clergy put themselves into a position to receive caring from the congregation when that seems appropriate. Their being able to model for the congregation how they deal with the pain and adjustments of a divorce or remarriage and how they respond to caring when it is offered can be an effective teaching tool for the congregation. They can model how to approach personal and marital crisis in a constructive and creative way, as well as present the opportunity for the laity to minister to the clergy. In addition, being divorced and/or remarried as a Brethren minister can make it easier for clergy to minister to other

divorced and remarried persons in the congregation. Persons are often more willing to come to a pastor if they can identify with the pastor's experience or if they believe the pastor can identify with theirs. Some parishoners feel that a pastor can better understand their marital struggles if the pastor has communicated an openness about his or her own struggles in a divorce or remarriage. Another way in which a pastor can provide ministry to a congregation around the issue of divorce is to model for the congregation a service or ritual that would (1) acknowledge the brokenness that exists when a marriage covenant is broken; (2) allow for the confession of one's humanity; (3) ask for forgiveness, support, and caring; and (4) allow for the congregation to respond through confession and expression of support and caring. This modeling of a service for separated or divorced persons would incorporate at its best a self-confrontation according to Matthew 18, confession, and a seeking of support from the faith community for help in beginning anew. This type of rite can be a model of what can happen within the faith community when divorce occurs with any member, not just the pastor. It can be a model for how the stage can be set for something new and creative to happen in the life of a congregation, even in the midst of the pain of a broken covenant. Death and resurrection become real and not just words about someone who was crucified a long time ago.

b. For Brethren Laity. There are several implications for the laity in belonging to a denomination that accepts divorce and remarriage among its clergy. Perhaps the most important implication for a divorced or remarried lay member is the feeling that how a congregation or a denomination responds to divorced or remarried clergy communicates a

great deal to that lay person about how a congregation or denomination will likely respond to them. If grace and acceptance are expressed to the divorced minister, either by a congregational vote to call him or her to serve as pastor or to remain as pastor, then that grace and acceptance will also likely be felt indirectly by divorced and remarried lay members within the congregation. As a result of feeling that grace, divorced lay members may become more active themselves in the ministry of the faith community and become more active in outreach to other divorced persons not yet active in the life of the congregation. This implication cannot be stressed too heavily. How the Brethren treat their divorced ministers indicates ultimately how they will treat divorced laity and whether or not there will be outreach to the large community of divorced persons not members of the faith community.

From seeing how a divorced and/or remarried minister deals with his or her own situation, lay members may become more open themselves to dealing realistically with their own marriages by not trying to perpetuate false impressions of living "happily ever after," now that the marriage has taken place. More lay persons may be willing to take part in marriage enrichment or growth activities if they see that their pastor has participated in those activities as part of dealing with his or her own marriage.

Another implication for the laity is that they are given the chance to provide ministry to the pastor and the pastor's family in times of stress or crisis. Having a pastor who is open to receiving caring can enable the laity to become the ministers they are by virtue of their baptism. This is based upon the assumption that pastors,

because of the caring attitude on the part of the denomination toward divorce, will be more open to ask for and receive ministry from others in the congregation.

A fourth implication for the laity is that a realistic attitude toward divorce upon the part of the denomination opens up the possibility that if they experience divorce, they may be able to create and participate in a service of recognition of the ending of a broken relationship with an accompanying acknowledgment of a need for support and acceptance from the members of the faith community. From the brokenness and sense of failure can emerge an opportunity to go on with one's life in the hope of experiencing new life and new relationships with the support of the congregation.

c. For the Church of the Brethren as a Denomination. What implications exist for the denomination as a whole when they allow for divorce among their clergy? One implication for the denomination is that the decline in church membership experienced over the past several years might be reversed. If divorced persons see the Brethren as a denomination that cares about divorced clergy, treats them as human beings, allows them to remain as pastors, then those persons may be more likely to join such a church as a way of finding a supportive community. Another implication for the Brethren is that they, by being open to emphasizing more heavily the need for support groups and growth experiences for divorced and remarried persons, will be responding to a real need (there are over one million divorces annually). By making these types of growth experiences available to persons outside of the faith

community, the Brethren perform an outreach function that can attract divorced and remarried persons to the denomination.

Rituals for divorce should become a part of Brethren corporate life as a result of the denomination's official stance on marriage and divorce. The United Methodist Church, as early as 1976, began using ceremonies for easing the pain of the dissolution of marriage. The Brethren should follow that example. If they do, they will be providing ministers and lay person alike the opportunity to be the faith community to each other, standing with each other not only when a marriage covenant is formed, but also when one is severed. A ritual for divorce can add richness to the life and worship of a congregation.

With regard to the gap between laity and clergy, the latest policy of the Brethren on clergy divorce should narrow that gap. As the humanity of Brethren ministers is acknowledged and dealt with, lay persons begin to realize more fully that the separation between them and the one who is called out to be minister is not that great a separation. Lay members begin to realize that they do not necessarily have to rely on the "experts" to do the work of ministry. The narrowing of the clergy-laity gap strengthens the Brethren belief in the priesthood of all believers as the best way to do ministry.

Wide application of the 1977 report on marriage and divorce indicates a continuing desire on the part of the Brethren to make their faith practical. Divorce is a reality in the society and among the Brethren. The Brethren, by choosing not to remain silent on the issue, have begun a program to express caring to persons who, when they experience divorce, are likely to be lonely and needing to establish links

of communication with others. Here is an extension of the traditional Brethren value of seeking to minister to others who are in pain. Recognizing divorce as a reality within the denomination will likely in the near future mean that the Brethren will be examining the issue of homosexuality among both laity and clergy. As one of the recommendations of the the 1977 report on marriage and divorce, the issue of sexuality was ordered studied. A report came to the Annual Conference of 1979, but was returned for further study. How the Brethren approach the issue of sexuality from a Christian perspective will determine what kind of ministry will be provided to those persons whose sexual preference has traditionally been defined as sin.

In summation, the implications of this study for the Brethren include the documentation that even though the Brethren officially have accepted divorce and remarriage, and even though the divorced ministers who are still active in the church report experiencing relatively higher levels of caring and healing from denominational sources, there is still much to do to encourage persons in the denomination to go beyond the stage of judgment as their dominant mode of response to divorce. Theologically, the Brethren need to continue their trend of emphasizing forgiveness and grace for their divorced ministers and lay members, rather than stopping at the point of judgment and confrontation.<sup>9</sup> In doing so, however, they must not forget that first step of confrontation in love for both lay members and clergy who experience divorce. Confronting the issue of divorce breaks the silence that tends to prevail when

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<sup>9</sup>G. Edwin Bontrager, Divorce and the Faithful Church (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1978), chapter four.

there is uncertainty about how to respond to a divorced person. Confrontation according to Matthew 18 needs to go both ways--from the congregation to the individual and/or from the individual to the congregation. In the mutuality of dialogue between the divorced lay person or minister and the congregation, understanding can emerge and growth can take place within the life of the faith community. The gap between laity and clergy is narrowed, the priesthood of all believers becomes more of a reality, and the Brethren thus communicate to those around them that they are a faith community in which divorced persons can find acceptance, caring, and a chance for the healing of emotional and spiritual wounds to take place. By incorporating into a possible divorce rite a statement of confrontation, that broken relationships and broken covenants biblically and theologically are sinful, the Brethren would be countering a prevalent societal attitude that says "we'll get married and if things don't work out, we'll just get a divorce." By taking divorce seriously and not accepting it uncritically, but at the same time by offering acceptance, caring, and confession of corporate participation in human sin, the Church of the Brethren can maintain a distinctiveness in the face of the wider society's more casual acceptance of divorce. By responding to divorce in this way, the Brethren are not merely becoming victims of acculturation. They are struggling with the issue of how to balance judgment with grace, have officially stated their wish to counter the heavy past of responding mainly with judgment, and will now need to find ways to translate official policy into widely accepted practice among its congregations.

### 3. Implications for Church History

One of the implications of doing an empirical study within a framework of church history is that data are created which can be of use to future historians. Before this study was done, there had been no published account of how many divorced Brethren ministers there had been in the 1950s, '60s, and '70s, the period during which the Brethren began facing openly the phenomenon of divorce among its ministers. This study provides data and a type of reality check for the Brethren about how their divorced ministers feel about the policies that were adopted to deal with their situations. This study creates a chapter in the history of the Church of the Brethren where before only a gap existed. Instead of relying upon diaries, or official minutes, this type of research has created records and statements that are of historical value. The statements made by the ministers who responded to the questionnaire provide personal records of individual feelings, attitudes, and actions of ordained ministers as they reflected upon certain aspects of their divorces and remarriages as they either continued to be active in the ministry or as they chose to find other forms of employment. This chapter in the history of the Brethren can be a starting place for future researchers who may want to record different aspects of the issue of divorce among Church of the Brethren clergy, aspects such as studying what has happened to the families of divorced Brethren ministers, or how particular congregations have handled the issue of retaining or hiring divorced ministers.



## B. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

One of the difficulties encountered in the empirical survey was in determining exactly who the divorced ministers were. Relying upon the personal knowledge of denominational officials at the national level and on the knowledge of the writer should have been augmented with the resources of each of the district executives within the denomination. Pressures of time prevented that extra step, which would have resulted in a list of divorced Brethren ministers that would have been more accurate than the one obtained for this study. Further research in this area should include at some point consultation with district executives.

Another limitation of the study is that it focused only upon the ordained minister involved in a divorce. No attempts were made to include any part of that minister's family. As a result, no data were obtained that would indicate whether families of divorced Brethren ministers experienced any caring or healing as a result of their associations with the Church of the Brethren. Future researchers would do well to study the effects of divorce upon the families of divorced Brethren ministers.

A third limitation of this dissertation is that by focusing on a specific population within a small denomination, the writer limited the degree of generalization of the findings to a larger population. There was no attempt in the statement of the problem to try to survey a sample of divorced ministers from all denominations as a way of obtaining data that could be applied to all divorced ministers. The value of this approach is that it can provide an example of one method for doing

institutional research that other denominations might adapt to their situations.

A fourth limitation of the approach is its reliance upon the assumption that the theology, or faith, of a denomination is being expressed accurately by the policies which are articulated as a means of expressing that faith. This study makes the assumption that the policies expressed in the 1977 report on marriage and divorce are logical and consistent outgrowths of the theological interpretations of scripture upon which they are based. They are expressions of how one denomination seeks to make its faith practical and as such are evaluated from the perspectives of those for whom the policies were intended to determine whether the faith is really being felt in practical ways. This approach can be strengthened in future research efforts by including perceptions of others in the denomination besides the target population of divorced Brethren clergy.

#### C. SUMMARY

This study has examined historically how the Church of the Brethren has attempted to make sense theologically, biblically, and practically of the issue of divorce among its members, most recently among its divorced ordained ministers. An empirical study was made among divorced Brethren ministers to determine what effects, if any, the Brethren policies on divorce and remarriage with regard to clergy have had upon that population. By studying historically and empirically the issue of clergy divorce among the Church of the Brethren, this author has presented a method of research that can help the field

of pastoral care and counseling strengthen its prophetic function in relation to its priestly one. The method is prophetic in that it calls to accountability the Brethren in their responses to divorced clergy in their denomination. The research has value for the field of church history, especially Brethren church history, in that it creates data about divorced Brethren ministers that to this time had not been available to church historians seeking to know how widespread divorce is among the clergy in the denomination. Value for the discipline of the behavioral sciences lies in the increase in available knowledge about a certain group of people within the American society, divorced Church of the Brethren ministers.

Have the Brethren been successful in making their faith practical with regard to the issue of clergy divorce? The conclusion is a mixed one, a "yes" and a "no." The Brethren have made an official statement saying that they want to provide caring and opportunities for healing for their divorced ministers. They have based that statement upon scripture and upon past ways of dealing with the issue of divorce. The Brethren have articulated their faith and attempted to make it practical for this particular issue, which has been a problem for them in recent years. For certain groups of Brethren ministers, those who have followed denominational policy and who have been able to remain active as ordained ministers in local congregations, the Church of the Brethren has been able to effect caring and healing and therefore make its faith practical in a limited way. In other instances, where divorced Brethren ministers have not followed recommended ways of acting when there has been a divorce and where they have either left the ministry or have not

kept their ordination status active, the Brethren have not been successful in making the faith practical. Some of the reasons for that lack of success may be due to actions by members of congregations in their responses to divorced ministers, or to actions of the divorced clergy themselves who did not attempt to seek caring or healing within the denomination. It is clear from the responses of divorced ministers as a whole that caring and healing is available from sources outside the Church of the Brethren at levels much higher than the ones reported from denominational sources. Much work still needs to be done before the Brethren begin to balance their history of judgment with the recent emphasis on forgiveness, grace, and mercy with regard to clergy divorce. The data provided in this study form the basis upon which the Church of the Brethren is called to accountability to incorporate its faith in concrete ways on a wider scale across the denomination so that the implications discussed above will become reality for the Brethren, both clergy and laity.

The Brethren have stated an intention and have begun to act. The prophetic word to them is that they need to continue the direction they have taken and implement more widely the model for caring and healing that they have developed. The Brethren still have a long way to go to become the community of faith for divorced ministers and laity that they hope to become. But they are on their way.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

## QUESTIONNAIRE: CLERGY DIVORCE IN THE CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

## SECTION A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Age: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Education (please list degrees earned): \_\_\_\_\_
3. Ministerial Status (please check all those that apply)
  - ☐ Licensed minister
  - ☐ Ordained minister
    - ☐ Active ordination
    - ☐ Inactive ordination
    - ☐ Minister emeritus
    - ☐ Ordination terminated
  - ☐ Licensed a second time
  - ☐ Ordained a second time
4. Employment
  - a. What is your current employment status?
    - ☐ Full-time employment
    - ☐ Part-time employment
    - ☐ Retired
    - ☐ Unemployed
  - b. If you are employed, what is your present position?
    - ☐ Pastor of a congregation in the Church of the Brethren
    - ☐ Pastor of a congregation in a non-Brethren denomination
    - ☐ Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. In what year were you first employed at your present position? \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. Place of employment at the time of your divorce:
    - ☐ Same place as now employed
    - ☐ Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. Place of employment at the time of your remarriage(if remarried):
    - ☐ Same place as now employed
    - ☐ Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
5. Length of time since your divorce/remarriage
  - a. In what year were you legally divorced? \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Have you remarried? ☐ Yes ☐ No
    - (1) If "yes," in what year did you remarry? \_\_\_\_\_

## SECTION B. ACTIONS YOU TOOK AT THE TIME OF YOUR DIVORCE

1. When divorce was imminent, did you take the initiative to inform the appropriate congregational supervisory committee or your supervisor?  
☐ yes  
☐ no
2. When divorce was imminent, did you take the initiative to talk with the appropriate district executive?  
☐ yes  
☐ no
3. Did you keep the district and the local congregation (or your employer) consistently informed during the early stages of your divorce?  
☐ yes  
☐ no
4. Did you seek the counsel of the appropriate congregational committee or the appropriate supervisor as to the effect of your divorce on your employment status?  
☐ yes  
☐ no

If "yes" to #4, which of the following options were chosen?  
(Please check the one that applies from the list below.)

- ☐ a. Renegotiation of the relationship with the local church to continue on a full-time indefinite basis with appropriate procedure for congregational support, pending favorable District Board action on ministerial status.
- ☐ b. Temporary leave of absence from active pastoral duties while decisions on the future of the relationship are in process.
- ☐ c. Renegotiation of the employment relationship by a contract for a specific time, with review possibilities by either you or the congregation. (This includes appropriate procedures for congregational support.)
- ☐ d. Resignation, with an effective date far enough in the future to allow for personal, family, and vocational adjustments.
- ☐ e. Immediate resignation with the congregational option of a vote to call you again to serve the congregation.
- ☐ f. Other (please describe briefly the action(s) taken):

If "no" to #4, what actions did you take?

## SECTION C. ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE CONGREGATION OR YOUR EMPLOYER

1. Did caring and skillful members of the appropriate congregational or institutional committee devise a means of sharing the information about your divorce with the congregation or institution and the district in ways which respected your privacy?

       yes

       no

Please comment briefly on your answer:

2. If you were employed by a local congregation at the time of your divorce, did members of the appropriate committee indicate next procedures and provide opportunities for church members to share their concerns with that committee in either formal or informal settings?

       yes

       no

       does not apply

3. If you remarried while you were employed by a local congregation, was there open communication between you and the appropriate congregational and district committees as to the effect of your remarriage upon your employment?

       yes

       no

       does not apply

## SECTION D. YOUR EVALUATION OF THE "CARING" YOU HAVE RECEIVED SINCE YOUR DIVORCE

Caring can be experienced in a variety of ways from a variety of sources. Usually caring is felt when individuals express support and love, letting you know that they understand your feelings and are willing to stand with you in whatever way they can. The next four questions attempt to explore your perceptions of the caring you have experienced.

1. On the whole, to what degree have you experienced caring from sources within the Church of the Brethren--its members, church officials, and others?

To a great degree

Some Caring

None at all

1

2

3

4

5



2. On the whole, to what degree have you experienced caring from Church of the Brethren sources during the following times?

	<u>To a great degree</u>		<u>Some Caring</u>	<u>None at all</u>	
a. Prior to divorce:	1	2	3	4	5
b. When divorce was imminent:	1	2	3	4	5
c. Following divorce:	1	2	3	4	5
d. Following remarriage:	1	2	3	4	5

3. On the whole, to what degree have you experienced caring from sources outside the Church of the Brethren?

	<u>To a great degree</u>		<u>Some Caring</u>	<u>None at all</u>	
a. Prior to divorce:	1	2	3	4	5
b. When divorce was imminent:	1	2	3	4	5
c. Following divorce:	1	2	3	4	5
d. Following remarriage:	1	2	3	4	5

4. What are the main sources of caring that you have experienced since your divorce (e. g., friends, congregation, family, counselor, etc.)?

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_
- d. \_\_\_\_\_

#### SECTION E. YOUR EVALUATION OF THE "HEALING" YOU HAVE EXPERIENCED SINCE YOUR DIVORCE

Healing can be experienced in many ways. Usually healing is a gradual process. Healing here refers to the movement you have experienced since your divorce toward a sense of emotional and spiritual wholeness and well-being. This section explores your perceptions of the healing you have experienced since your divorce.

1. On the whole, to what degree have you experienced healing since your divorce?

<u>To a great degree</u>		<u>Some Healing</u>		<u>None at all</u>
1	2	3	4	5

2. To what degree is the healing you have experienced the result of your relationships with the Church of the Brethren--its members, officials, others?

<u>To a great degree</u>		<u>To some degree</u>		<u>None at all</u>
1	2	3	4	5

3. To what degree is the healing you have experienced the result of your relationships with persons or institutions outside the Church of the Brethren?

<u>To a great degree</u>		<u>To some degree</u>		<u>None at all</u>
1	2	3	4	5

4. What were the main sources of healing for you (e. g., prayer, friends, time, counseling, etc.)?

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

d. \_\_\_\_\_

SECTION F. YOUR AWARENESS OF THE CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN'S OFFICIAL  
STAND ON DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE IN RELATION TO ITS MINISTERS

1. The Church of the Brethren adopted in 1977 an Annual Conference report on divorce and remarriage. This report included several recommendations for divorcing, divorced, and remarried ministers. How familiar are you with that report?

<u>Very familiar with it</u>		<u>Somewhat familiar</u>		<u>Not at all familiar</u>
1	2	3	4	5

2. If you are familiar with the 1977 report, to what degree does it meet the needs of divorced or remarried ministers in the Church of the Brethren?

<u>Very well</u>		<u>Adequately</u>		<u>Not at all</u>
1	2	3	4	5

## SECTION G. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Dissolution of a marital relationship is usually a painful, difficult experience, one that is hard to quantify by marking responses on a questionnaire. Please use the space below (and on the back) to comment on any areas of your divorce and/or remarriage experience that you feel are important.

This questionnaire has been designed to elicit responses about only a limited area of your experience. Your comments about other areas, or elaboration about any of the response you have made above, are certainly welcome.

THANK YOU for your willingness to participate in this study and the time you took to respond to my questions! Please take a moment to go back over the questionnaire to be sure you have answered each question.

Return the enclosed post card if you wish to receive the results of this study.

## APPENDIX B

## QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

## A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

N = 23

1. Age

age-frequency

31-1	40-3	50-2	61-1
33-2	41-1	52-1	62-1
36-2	44-1	56-1	<u>2</u> (8.7%)
37-1	45-1	57-1	
<u>6</u> (26.1%)	46-1	<u>5</u> (21.7%)	
	48-2		
	49-1		
	<u>10</u> (43.5%)		

Mean age = 45

2. Education

A.A.--1	M.A./M.S.--6	Masters in Cn. Ed.--1
B.A./B.S.--20	M.S.W.--1	D.Rel.--1
B.D.--4	M.Th.--1	Ph.D.--1
M.Div.--15	S.T.M.--3	

3. Ministerial Status

Licensed minister--1 (4.3%)	Ordained a second time--2
Ordained minister--19 (82.6%)	Licensed a second time--0
Active ordin.--15	
Inactive ord.-- 4	
Emeritus--0	
Terminated--3 (13.04%)	

4. Employment

Full-time--22 (95.7%)  
 Part-time-- 1 ( 4.3%)

a. Present position

Pastor (or ass't.)\* of a CB congregation--8 (34.8%)  
 Pastor of a non-Brethren congregation--0  
 Other--15 (65.2%)  
     probation officer--3  
     chaplain--2  
 \*1 ass't. district exec. (PT + pastor)--1  
   pastor college professor--1

## Other (continued)

government administrator--1  
 hearing officer, DMV  
 (PT family counselor)--1  
 manager, auto parts store--1  
 medical sales representative--1  
 president of own business--1  
 public school teacher--1  
 pulpit supply (PT)--1  
 seminary & college staff--1  
 supervising social worker--1  
 trainer in community education--1

b. Year of employment at present position

1978--4	1973--3	no answer--1 (4.5%)
1977--5	1972--2	
1976--3	1971--1	
1975--1	1969--2	
<u>13 (56.5%)</u>	<u>9 (39.1%)</u>	

c. Place of employment at time of divorce

same--10 (43.5%)	
other--13 (56.5%)	
pastorate at a different church	2
college professor	2
CB General Board staff member	1
college faculty + consultant	1
college rel. affairs director	1
district office	1
drug treatment counselor	1
graduate school	1
plumbing	1
psychiatric center worker	1
unemployed	<u>1</u>
	13

d. Place of employment at time of remarriage

same--9 (60%)      --15 (65.2%)  
 other--6 (40%)  
 not applicable--8 (34.8%)

other: college religious affairs director	1
graduate student	1
plumber	1
psychiatric center worker	1
Searle Labs	1
United Way, dir. special programs	<u>1</u>
	6

5. Length of Time since Divorce/Remarriage

<u>a. Year of Divorce</u>	<u>b. Remarried?</u>	<u>c. Yr. of Remarriage</u>
1979--1	yes--15 (65%)	1978--2
1977--2	no-- 8 (35%)	1977--2
1976--4		1976--2
1975--3	same year -- 6 (40%)	1975--1
1974--4	1 yr. later -- 2 (13%)	1974--4
1973--4	2 yrs. later -- 4 (27%)	1973--1
1972--2	4 yrs. later -- 2 (13%)	1970--1
1970--1	5 yrs. later -- 1 ( 7%)	1969--1
1967--1	15	1960--1
1950--1		15
23		

## B. ACTIONS MINISTERS TOOK AT THE TIME OF DIVORCE

1. When divorce was imminent, took the initiative to inform the appropriate congregational supervisory committee or supervisor:

yes--15 (65%)                      no--4 (17%)                      not applicable--4(17%)

2. When divorce was imminent, took the initiative to talk with the appropriate district executive:

yes--13 (57%)                      no--6 (26%)                      not applicable--4 (17%)

3. Kept the district and local congregation (or employer) consistently informed during the early stages of the divorce:

yes--14 (61%)                      no--6 (26%)                      not applicable--3 (13%)

4. Sought the counsel of the appropriate congregational committee or appropriate supervisor as to the effect of divorce upon employment status:

yes--13 (57%)                      no--5 (22%)                      not applicable--5 (22%)

If "yes" to "B.4.," options chosen:

- a. Renegotiation of relationship with local church to continue on a full-time indefinite basis with ... congregational support and favorable District Board action on ministerial status....

2

- b. Temporary leave of absence....

0

- c. Renegotiation of employment relationship by a contract for a specific time....

1



- (5) Met with ministry commission and agreed to announce the following Sunday that my wife had moved out. Informed church board when we later agreed on a divorce.

b. Comments "no":

- (1) Little if any skill evident on part of district commission. They reacted to rumor rather than to me. However, we did achieve a positive functional relationship.
- (2) Attitude was that this information need not be announced publicly.
- (3) Every effort was made to make sure that the church and denomination knew nothing whatsoever about what was happening.
- (4) The whole idea seemed to make people in the congregation uncomfortable.
- (5) Was not a pastor or involved with congregation--3.

2. If you were employed by a local congregation at the time of your divorce, did members of the appropriate committee indicate next procedures and provide opportunities for church members to share their concerns with that committee in formal or informal settings?

yes--5 (22%)                      no--4 (17%)                      not applicable--13 (57%)  
no answer-- 1 ( 4%)

3. If you remarried while you were employed by a local congregation, was there open communication between you and the appropriate congregational and district committees as to the effect of your remarriage upon your employment?

yes--1 (4%)                      no--2 (9%)                      not applicable--17 (74%)  
no answer-- 3 (13%)

NOTE: At the time of, or just prior to, divorce or separation:

10 ministers were employed by a local congregation (44%)  
8 ministers were employed by other CB institutions (35%)  
5--college or seminary instructors or administrators  
2--district offices  
1--CB General Board  
5 ministers were not directly related to a CB institution (22%)

23

D. EVALUATION OF "CARING" RECEIVED SINCE THE DIVORCE

	<u>To a</u>		<u>Some</u>	<u>None</u>	<u>No</u>
	<u>Great Degree</u>		<u>Caring</u>	<u>At All</u>	<u>Ans.</u>
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
1. Caring from CB sources					
"on the whole":	3	3	5	4	3
					5





## E. EVALUATION OF "HEALING" EXPERIENCED SINCE THE DIVORCE

	<u>To a Great</u> <u>Degree</u> (1)	(2)	<u>Some</u> <u>Healing</u> (3)	(4)	<u>None</u> <u>At All</u> (5)	<u>No</u> <u>Ans.</u>
1. Healing experienced on the whole:	11	9	2	0	0	1
2. Healing from CB sources:	1	6	6	3	6	1
3. Healing from sources outside CB:	9	8	4	0	0	2
4. Main sources of healing:						
friends--20			staff, colleagues, supervisors--3			
time--10			children--2			
therapy, counseling--12			self-exploration--2			
prayer--6			others--18			
family--4						
second wife--4						

"others" included: change of employment, church, C.P.E., faith, identity crisis resolution, letters, liturgy, non-Brethren congregation, love (of life), scriptures, prayer, God's grace, self-forgiveness, spiritual growth, personal approaches, acceptance of single life-style, sharing group of non-Brethren ministers, singles group (non-CB), staying with the work rather than withdrawing, gaining enough perspective to be able to see the experience more as a curriculum for learning about myself

## 5. Healing scores: high healing and low healing

	<u>High Healing</u> (1, 2)	<u>Low Healing</u> (4, 5)
a. Healing on the whole:	20 (87%)	0
b. Healing from CB sources:	7 (30%)	9 (39%)
c. Healing from sources outside CB:	17 (74%)	0

F. AWARENESS OF CB'S OFFICIAL STAND ON DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE IN RELATION TO ITS MINISTERS

	<u>Very</u> <u>Familiar</u> (1)	<u>Somewhat</u> <u>Familiar</u> (2)	(3)	<u>Not at All</u> <u>Familiar</u> (4)	(5)	<u>No</u> <u>Ans.</u>
1. Familiarity with 1977 Annual Conference report:	3	6	4	6	3	1
	<u>Very</u> <u>Well</u> (1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	<u>Not</u> <u>At All</u> (5)	<u>No</u> <u>Ans.</u>
2. If it is familiar, how well does it meet needs of divorced or remarried CB ministers?	1	2	4	5	1	10

G. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS (See Appendix C)

H. PERCENTAGE OF RETURN OF QUESTIONNAIRES

88.5% return rate of questionnaires distributed (23/26)

	Agreed in Advance to Participate	No Response to Initial Inquiry	Refused to Participate in Study	TOTALS
Divorced Ministers Contacted:	20	6	2	28
Questionnaires Distributed:	20	6	0	26
Questionnaires Returned:	20	3	0	23
Percentage of Return:	100%	50%	--	88.5% (23/26)
				82.1% (23/28)

## APPENDIX C

COMMENTS OF DIVORCED BRETHREN MINISTERS  
(Section G of questionnaire)

1. The Church of the Brethren has come a very long way over the past six years and I hope and pray that its new approach is indeed caring. Now that I am back in the ... district, I am being used in a positive way because of my specialized skills and somewhat novel ministry.... However I still feel my scars itch when I am in the presence of the true believers as if somehow my leprosy has not healed. Nonetheless we deserve each other and I feel that time will alleviate some of the sensitivity I feel.

Thanks for asking me to participate in this study. It is needed and I look forward to the results.

2. Concerning section B, divorce was not imminent at the time of my resignation. It took place long (1 year) after I resigned my position. Consequently, perhaps separation should be substituted for divorce.

Regarding section D: in order to alleviate the impression that caring was not felt from the church, it needs to be stated that caring was basically not sought from the church.

3. The divorce was the most painful experience of my life thus far. At the time I felt I had sinned against myself, my family, society, the church, and God. Little by little healing took place, with more awareness of myself, my ex-husband, and our relationship. I have often tried to evaluate the whole situation, but feel that all the ramifications can never be completely understood.

A very happy and successful second marriage has helped to provide the reassurance, confidence and belief in marriage and myself that I had originally had. A very successful, though short, period as assistant and interim pastor in a large congregation has helped me see my potentials and abilities as a divorced/remarried pastor (female at that!) and to find the acceptance and reassurance of a congregation that is vital to effective ministry.

The divorce itself also has played a large part in the development of my theology and faith pilgrimage. That part is a long story!

4. You are welcome to call me collect ... if you would like further information.... The actions of my executive and the General Board were the single most contributing factors in my disillusionment with the C.O.B. Remember that in 1974 one of the top ten priorities of the national church was to explore and understand alternative life styles; and that was the year the divorce report query was initiated.

Thanks for caring enough about the problem to do this study.  
The C.O.B. needs your work!

5. The lack of support I felt from the Brethren in the early stages should be seen in the light of several thoughts: (1) I had not been professionally involved nor held membership in a Brethren congregation for several years prior to the divorce; (2) during and since the divorce process my principal support from Brethren has been my family--parents, children; (3) since I am not involved with Brethren activities, it is difficult for both the Brethren and myself to make contact in organic ways; (4) my initial guilt about the whole thing led to some isolation from my family until I forgave myself.

My former wife and my children are my strongest contact with the Brethren. Soon after the divorce, they moved to .... Hence, I get to ... frequently and occasionally to the ... Church, .... This means that I see people I knew and worked with in many settings. Both I and they seem hesitant to reach out. I recently heard myself describing the situation by indicating that, in the divorce settlement, it seems as if she got the Church of the Brethren.

I have heard from some Brethren that the divorce must have been my fault (tho I must say that has been more subtle--or perceived--than strong).

My current attitude is that, since my Brethren roots go very deep, I will always be Brethren (or sistern!). I have no need for it to be either different or the same as it is between me and the Brethren. I will always appreciate the Brethren values.

I wish you well on the study. Please use this material as you wish.

6. Guilt, especially with respect to children, is a heavy factor in the healing process. It has been very difficult to separate real from neurotic guilt, and because it took such guts to divorce in the first place, I had blocked, isolated, and repressed most feelings about it. Healing began only after two years. Until then it was defenses that kept me together.

A select company of Brethren have been great--two Elgin staff members, district executive, a couple (of) laity. Otherwise the Brethren have been rather silent.

7. For me, the problem came not with the divorce but when I talked of remarriage. Some very conservative elements in the church used the personal problems as a way of getting at theological or social differences.

The problem is not with the Church's statement but with the attitudes of people and the opportunity for people who do not attend church to come out and vote when a pastor's stay is at stake.

One of the resurrection stories tells of tombs being opened by an earthquake and people seen who had not been seen in years. The knowledge of remarriage produced this effect in the church.

8. When I resigned as minister, it was fully my intent to seek other employment. I had no idea or expectation that the church would offer a new contract. Even after that became a possibility, I was not certain I wanted to remain as minister. The encouragement that I

received from members personally and the vote which was overwhelmingly positive helped me to decide. My impulse was to flee and begin again; yet, more deeply I knew I wanted to stay and experience a resolving of relationships--not leaving at the point of brokenness.

I experienced divorce as the greatest failure of my life and the most devastating. Only slowly did I come to see it as a positive thing for my life.

The district executive was supportive--practiced a benevolent neutrality so far as the divorce itself was concerned, but favorable to my continuing.

I did not consult with the congregation concerning remarriage. There was never a question in my mind as to whether I wanted to share my life with a partner. I had every sense of that being God's intention for me. Since association (mine) with the one who would become my wife was open and with some frequency, I think that persons in leadership positions might easily have assumed that remarriage was coming. We were married early one Sunday morning in the church library by a neighboring pastor. Only family was present. The wedding was announced at the close of the morning worship service. We invited the congregation to a lunch in the Fellowship Hall. A number of members had helped prepare the lunch.

I felt strongly that my remarriage was a personal decision--one that I must make, and wanted to make. If remarriage created a problem for the congregation, they would need to deal with that. I did not assume that it was a congregational matter or that it would create problems. In fact, the divorce and remarriage has opened my ministry to some; made it more difficult for others; for most, I do not discern a difference.

9. Because of the deepness of my commitment to the church, I felt emotionally I had to divorce myself from the church (unconsciously) to give myself permission to do what I did. The ministerial "counseling" I received at the time was ... helpful (both locally and letters I wrote to national figures).

Incidentally, the decision of the church to remove ordination if not "active" has not helped my feelings that the church has become a "pragmatic, political group" rather than a fellowship interested in promoting spiritual growth.

10. It seems to me your survey is set up with a built-in fault. You assume we are pastors when we divorce; this is not always true.

11. The church and my role as minister have placed certain structures on me which have prevented me from getting into self-destructive behavior. I have found it most difficult to live within those structures. When I do I feel much more healthy and have energy and a sense of integrity in doing my work--sublimation! It's not one of my favorite solutions to a problem. But currently it seems to be working for me.

I feel some gentle pressures from the congregation to get a wife. Overall, the congregation seems comfortable with my being single.

Recently I was certified ... in AAPC and have had some temptations to take a full time job as a Pastoral Counselor--a chance to use some skills I have worked hard to acquire. --less structures on my private life. But I have enjoyed my work so much in the congregation that I would find it difficult to leave.

Working one day a week at the Pastoral Counseling Center ... gives me a change of pace and a new set of friends apart from the congregation. This has been particularly helpful as I have gone through the painful ordeal of divorce.

12. Though my own responses were strained by the pain of divorce, I felt the local CB ... and the Brethren on the faculty at the college were terribly inadequate in their caring. The non-Brethren faculty were the most supportive during my divorce proceedings. Of the Brethren who made any contact, most of them took sides.

13. My divorce occurred when this seemed the ultimate sin by the CB. Since then the church's position has become more accepting of our humanity. We are a long way from a non-judgmental attitude yet.

It was the Methodist Church that "saved me for the church." If we had not experienced real acceptance there, I think I would have given up on the institutional church--for we received none at all from the Brethren.

And I hope within the church there is a new climate regarding counseling so troubled persons will be more willing to seek help.

14. I was getting M.S.W. at time of divorce. It took two to 2½ years to really feel good about myself as a single person. Since then I have led various divorce support groups, therapy groups, etc., for last six years.

I would be interested in results of your paper. I'm sorry so much of this questionnaire does not apply to my divorce situation.

15. I elected to leave the local congregation for three reasons: (1) I could have stayed on. The majority wanted me to do so. However, a minority would not have been happy with this. (2) I felt that I personally needed time away from the ministry to concentrate on taking care of my own needs. (3) The bad experience that some CB divorced ministers had had at that time with the CB--a small but very bitterly judgmental group.

The District was very helpful in helping to pay for a thorough vocational evaluation by an able psychologist. This eventually led me into counselling. The District Executive was very helpful and understanding as well as the local ministerial board and the Elgin office.

When I was faced with the separation, I asked five other non-Brethren ministers and chaplains to meet with me to share our common problems. This group went on for about a year and was very helpful.

The Singles group at ... became my church family. Here I felt completely accepted among others, most of whom had been divorced. It also provided a social life for me and opportunity to meet new friends. I met my new spouse in this group.

My year's training in counselling helped me to understand myself, along with the group therapy which was a part of the curriculum. I still do about 10 hours of family counselling a week and find that the divorce experience has helped me in counselling since most of those who come for counselling are either divorced or contemplating it.

The divorce experience, though painful, has been a tremendous growing experience for me and forced me to face areas of my life formerly neglected. The grace of God has become a daily reality to me in a new way. I am a freer and a happier person. Though I do not plan to return to the pastorate, I continue to exercise leadership in a local CB.

16. I have a strong love and concern for the CB. But took two strong stands that have not been to the liking of many: first, CO position (with a prison sentence) and second, divorce. I wouldn't change either position. Both positions caused a lot of soul searching and stretching. This marriage is what I always thought marriage was! Hard to explain to people when they close their minds to divorce.

I did experience a lot of counseling prior to the divorce. Jesse Z. about 6 months. Earle F. about 6 months. Clergy (private service 1½ years); ... counseling service 2+ years; Mental Health service about 1½ years (still walk in as needed and afforded). We used the above over a ten year period out of nineteen.

You don't have questions about kids--there were three; one in BVS and all three active in church and activities.

17. Although I am now in "good growth" stage it took more than two years to make the adjustment of feeling divorced. Another divorced person and I now lead many Divorce Recovery Workshops....



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